EUROPEAN FOOTBALL'S GREAT DIVIDE

SPECIAL REPORT

World Soccer

GLOBAL FOOTBALL SINCE 1960

March 2017

KINGS OF AFRICA

How Cameroon won the 2017 Nations Cup

NEW FEATURE

ON THE RADAR

The players making waves around the world

TALENT SCOUT

DEBUT SENSATIONS

Europe's most exciting youngsters

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

Luka MODRIC

The world's best midfielder?

PREVIEW

MAJOR LEAGUE SOCCER

New clubs, new stars

PLUS MARACANA STADIUM // JULIAN NAGELSMANN // LIBERTADORES CUP PREVIEW

CLASSIC FOOTBALL SHIRTS

THE WORLD'S BIGGEST COLLECTION OF ORIGINAL FOOTBALL SHIRTS

www.classicfootballshirts.co.uk

10% OFF WITH DISCOUNT CODE: WORLD10

HUGE Clearance Range also Available

£12.99

£14.99

£29.99

£19.99

£14.99

www.classicfootballshirts.co.uk

@classicshirts

/ClassicFootballShirts

@classicfootballshirts

WorldSoccer
Global football intelligence since 1960

Contents

March 2017

FEATURES

30 **African Nations Cup**
Report, analysis, picture essay

40 **Player biography**
Luka Modric

46 **Special Feature**
A divided Europe

THE WORLD THIS MONTH

People in the news...on and off the pitch

4 **In pictures**
10 **From the Editor**
13 **Headliners**
14 **Keir Radnedge** Ceferin rings changes
16 **Transfer window** the big deals
18 **Paul Gardner** the problem with marketing
20 **On the Radar** Kylian Mbappe
25 **Ins & outs** people on the move
26 **Brian Glanville** Wenger's time is up

6 OF THE BEST

54 Footballing sons

TALENT SCOUT

56 Top-flight debutants

FACE TO FACE

58 Julian Nagelsmann

ARCHIVES

60 March 1966

WOMEN'S FOOTBALL

74 Kelly Smith retires

THE GREAT MATCHES

90 Celtic v Internazionale, 1967

Follow World Soccer online
FOOTBALL 24-7

Follow @worldsoccermag Like World Soccer Magazine

SAVE MONEY ON WorldSoccer
Exclusive subscription offer.
See page 8

World Service

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

64 **African Nations Cup** review from Gabon
68 **USA** MLS clubs look south of the border
72 **Libertadores Cup** group stage preview
77 **Honduras** Another title for coach Pinto
78 **Burundi** local talent needs chance to shine
80 **Japan** champs Kashima Antlers are on a roll
82 **Rep of Ireland** Dundalk seek four in a row

PLUS 76 Global diary 84 Results, tables, fixtures 88 Squads

In Pictures

The global game caught on camera

COLOMBIA...supporters celebrate the 90th anniversary of America de Cali with a ring of red flares around the perimeter of the pitch before the league match against Junior

SPAIN...Celta Vigo fans greet their team's bus as it arrives at the Estadio Municipal de Balaidos prior to the Spanish Cup semi-final against Alaves

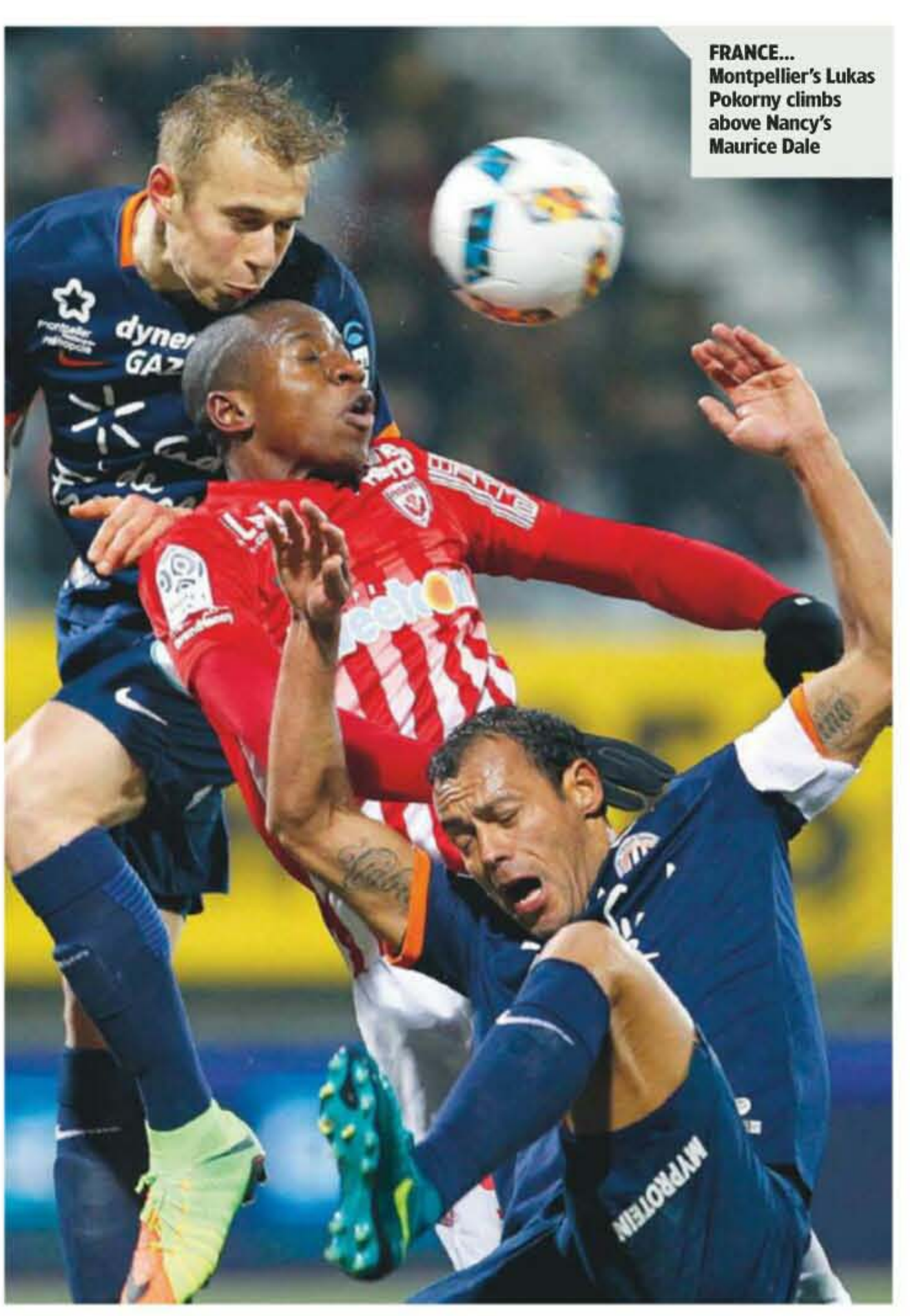
GERMANY... (from left) Bayern Munich's Arturo Vidal, Arjen Robben, Mats Hummels and Robert Lewandowski put Arsenal under pressure in the Champions League

AUSTRALIA...Four of the Melbourne City women's team lie down in confetti after winning the 2017 W-League Grand Final

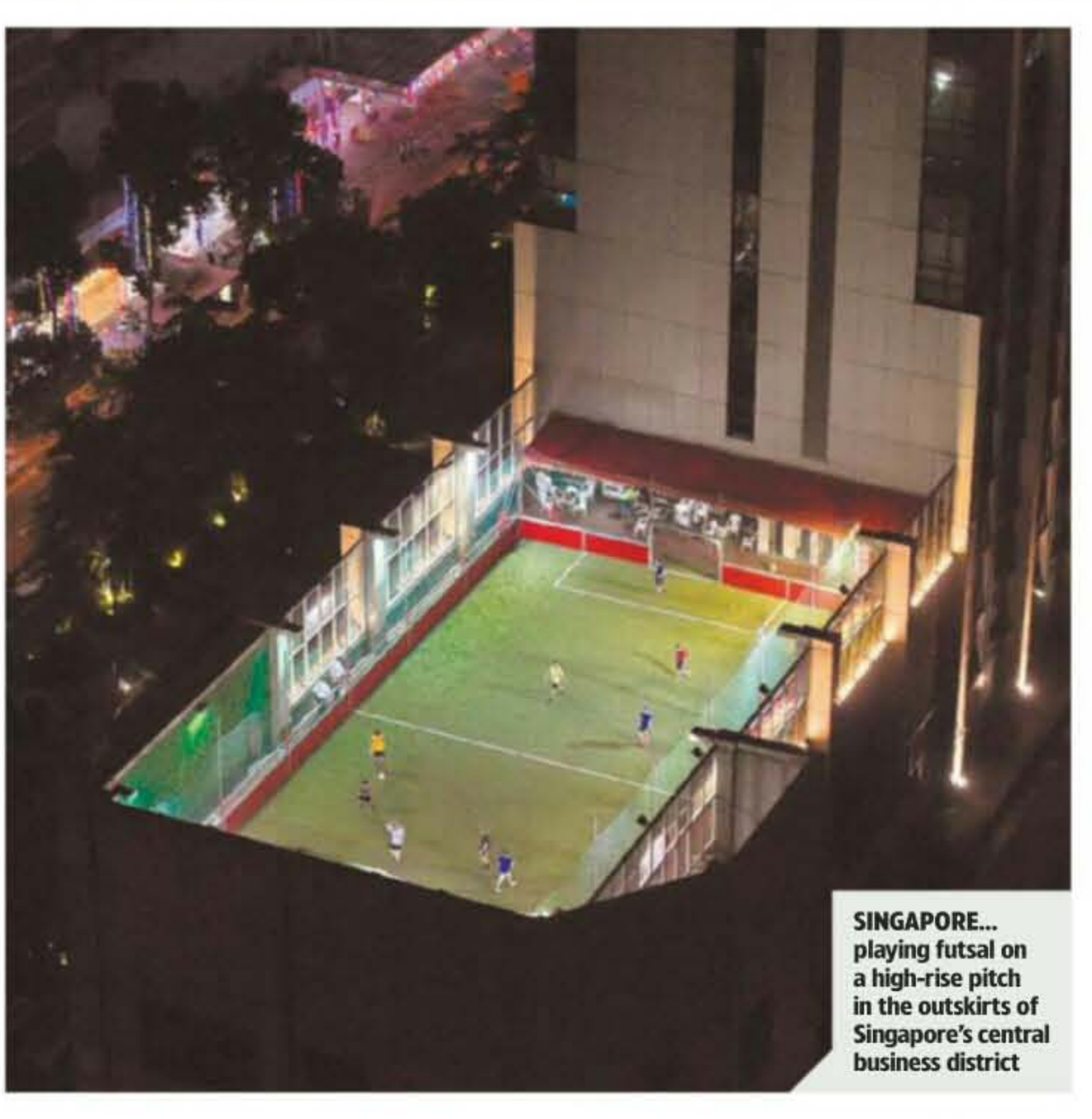
PICTURES OF THE MONTH QR CODE

To see more of the best photos from the month, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the images by logging on to http://po.st/gbkLnU

ARGENTINA... Sebastian Driussi of River Plate celebrates after scoring against Boca Juniors in a pre-season tournament



FRANCE... Montpellier's Lukas Pokorny climbs above Nancy's Maurice Dale



SINGAPORE... playing futsal on a high-rise pitch in the outskirts of Singapore's central business district

Subscribe today and

SAVE UP TO 31%

Monthly extras, Exclusive for subscribers.

Rewards

Subscribe today and join Rewards for free to get even more from your magazine. Handpicked offers, unique giveaways and unmissable prizes.

Join Rewards at **worldsoccer.com/rewards**

Subscribe online at

worldsoccersubs.com/11ZK

Complete the coupon opposite

THE DIRECT DEBIT GUARANTEE: This Guarantee is offered by all banks and building societies that accept instructions to pay Direct Debits. If there are any changes to the amount, date or frequency of your Direct Debit Time Inc. (UK) Ltd will notify you 10 working days in advance of your account being debited or as otherwise agreed. If you request Time Inc. (UK) Ltd to collect a payment, confirmation of the amount and date will be given to you at the time of the request. If an error is made in the payment of your Direct Debit, by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd or your bank or building society you are entitled to a full and immediate refund of the amount paid from your bank or building society – If you receive a refund you are not entitled to, you must pay it back when Time Inc. (UK) Ltd asks you to. You can cancel a Direct Debit at any time by simply contacting your bank or building society. Written confirmation may be required. Please also notify us.

WORLD SOCCER SUBSCRIPTION OFFER

HERE'S THE DEAL:

- ★ Pay less than at the newsagent
- ★ 13 issues a year delivered direct to your door
- ★ Enjoy exclusive offers with Rewards. Visit worldsoccer.com/rewards

0330 333 1113

Quote code: **11ZK**

7 days a week from 8am to 9pm (UK time)

The Rewards scheme is available for all active print subscribers of magazines published by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, free of charge. Digital subscribers also get access as long as the subscription has been purchased directly through the publishers at magazinesdirect.com. For full terms and conditions visit mymagazinerewards.co.uk.

Post the completed order form to: FREEPOST Time Inc
(No further address needed. No stamp required – for UK only)

YES! I would like to subscribe to **World Soccer**

☐ UK 6 Monthly Direct Debit: Pay only £22.99 every 6 months saving 31% (full price £33.40) **TOP OFFER**

☐ 2 years (26 issues) Cheque/Credit or Debit Card- Pay only £93.49 (full price £133.58) saving 30% across the two years

☐ 1 year (13 issues) Cheque/Credit or Debit Card- Pay only £49.49 (full price £66.79) saving 25% across the year

OVERSEAS OFFERS: SAVING UP TO 35%

+44 330 333 1113 quote code 11ZK

or visit **worldsoccersubs.com/11ZK**

US toll free number 1888 313 5528 (lines open Mon-Fri 9am-8pm, Sat 9am-4pm EST)

YOUR DETAILS:

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms: Forename:

Surname:

Email:

Address:

Postcode:

Home Tel. No: (inc area code)

Mobile:

Date of Birth: D D M M Y Y Y Y

GIFT SUBSCRIPTION

Please fill out to give more than one subscription, please supply address details on a separate sheet.

Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms: Forename:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

CHOOSE FROM 3 EASY WAYS TO PAY:

1. **CHEQUE**
I enclose a cheque/postal order for: £_____ made payable to Time Inc. (UK) Ltd.

2. **CREDIT/DEBIT CARD**
Please debit my: ☐ Amex ☐ Visa ☐ Visa Debit ☐ Mastercard
Card No.

Expiry Date
M M Y Y

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

3. **DIRECT DEBIT: To pay £22.99 every 6 months by UK Direct Debit, please complete your details below:**

PAYMENT DETAILS – DIRECT DEBIT
Instruction to your bank or building society to pay by Direct Debit.
For office use only: Originators Reference – 764 221

Name of Bank:

Address of Bank:

Postcode:

Name of Account Holder:

Sort Code: Account No:

Instruction to your Bank or Building Society Please pay Time Inc. (UK) Ltd Direct Debits from the account detailed on this Instruction subject to the safeguards assured by the Direct Debit Guarantee. I understand that this instruction may remain with Time Inc. (UK) Ltd and if so, details will be passed electronically to my Bank or Building Society.

Signature: Date:
(I am over 18)

*£22.99 payable by 6 monthly Direct Debit. This price is guaranteed for the first 12 months and we will notify you in advance of any price changes. **Offer closes 31st March 2017.** Offer open to new subscribers only. Please allow up to six weeks for delivery of your first subscription issue (up to eight weeks overseas). The full subscription rate is for 1 year (13 issues) and includes postage and packaging. If the magazine ordered changes frequency per annum, we will honour the number of issues paid for, not the term of the subscription. For full terms and conditions, visit www.magazinesdirect.com/terms. For enquiries from the UK please call: 0330 333 4333, for overseas please call: +44 330 333 4333 (lines are open Monday- Friday, 8:30am- 5:30pm UK Time, ex. Bank Holidays) or e-mail: help@magazinesdirect.com. Calls to 0330 numbers will be charged at no more than a national landline call, and may be included in your phone providers call bundle. We will process your data in accordance with our Privacy Policy (www.timeincuk.com/privacy). By providing your information, you agree to be contacted by Time Inc. (UK) Ltd, publisher of World Soccer and other iconic media brands, with information about our goods and services and those of our carefully selected third parties. Please tick here if you do not wish to receive these messages: ☐ by email and/or SMS ☐ by post and/or telephone ☐ about carefully selected third party goods and services.

XWS Code 11ZK

FROM THE EDITOR

Flicking back through old editions of *World Soccer*, it is noticeable how much space was devoted to great names from Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union.

The likes of Dynamo Kiev, Steaua Bucharest and Dinamo Tbilisi were rightly feted as powerhouses of the global game in the 1960s, 1970s and into the 1980s. Yet today those clubs – the ones that still exist, that is – are shadows of their former selves.

The consolidation of wealth in the hands of the continent's Big Five leagues (England, France, Germany, Italy, Spain) has left clubs in the East with next to nothing. And, as Steve Menary reports (page 46), the gap is getting bigger.

> Consolidation of wealth in the hands of the continent's Big Five leagues has left clubs in the East with next to nothing

These days, an upset in the Champions League occurs when Barcelona are unexpectedly beaten by Paris Saint-Germain, the richest club (by some distance) in France.

The chances of a genuine surprise decline every season as UEFA hands more wealth – and Champions League places – to the wealthiest clubs.

Declining TV ratings may force UEFA to address the issue but, at the moment, all we can do is highlight the problem.

Gavin Hamilton, Editor

10 SIGNIFICANT EVENTS THIS MONTH

1. Cameroon win African Nations Cup ..... p30 & p66
2. Maracana lies idle p24
3. Mafia problems in Italy p22
4. Top ref Clattenburg quits Premier League p13
5. Wenger under pressure p26
6. Philipp Lahm announces his retirement p25
7. Ceferin rings changes at UEFA p14
8. J.League gets underway in Japan p80
9. Libertadores group stage starts p72
10. MLS season kicks off p68

WORLD CUP 2026

Potential...Gianni Infantino (left) and Victor Montagliani

Green light to Concacaf bid for 2026 World Cup

FIFA president Gianni Infantino has given the strongest indication yet that the 2026 World Cup could be held in North America, saying that the tournament could be co-hosted by as many as four countries.

"We will encourage co-hosting for the World Cup because we need FIFA to show we are reasonable and we have to think about sustainability long term," explained Infantino.

"[We could]...maybe bring together two, three, four countries who can jointly present a project with three, four, five stadiums each.

"We will certainly encourage it. Ideally the countries will be close to each other."

Infantino's comments were welcomed by CONCACAF president Victor Montagliani, who admitted that the "door was wide open" on a joint bid from the USA, Canada and Mexico, with maybe some involvement from the Caribbean.

"The possibilities are endless," Montagliani said of an 80-game, 48-team tournament in 2026.

"We are all Zozulya"

Real Betis players send a T-shirt message of solidarity to Ukrainian team-mate Roman Zozulya (right), whose January loan to Rayo Vallecano lasted only a few hours, after he was attacked by fans of his new club for alleged neo-Nazi links

ANGOLA

Seventeen dead in stadium stampede

At least 17 people were killed when fans stormed stadium gates in the northern Angolan city of Uige after failing to gain entry to a game between Santa Rita de Cassia and Recreativo do Libolo. Hundreds more were reported to have been injured in the stampede at the Estadio 4 de Janeiro.

"There has been a push that led to the suffocation of people," said Ernesto Luis, director general of the local hospital. "Some people had to walk on top of other people.

"There were 76 casualties, of whom 17 died."

Tragedy...outside the stadium in Uige

HEROES & VILLAINS

WAYNE ROONEY

Set a new club scoring record for Manchester United with his 250th first-team goal for the side in a 1-1 draw away at Stoke City in the Premier League.

Club record...Wayne Rooney

MARCO SILVA

The credentials of the Portuguese coach were questioned by some English pundits but he led Hull City to a series of impressive results during his first month in charge.

LILLE

The French club offered women free entry to their Ligue 1 fixture against Lorient after sexist banners were displayed in their game away to Lyon. During Lille's 2-1 win, two signs were held up in the Parc Olympique Lyonnais home crowd, showing a woman above the word "kitchen" and a man above the word "stadium".

ESSAM EL HADARY

At 44 years and two days, Egypt's goalkeeper became the oldest player in African Nation Cup history when he replaced first-choice Ahmed El Shenawy against Mali. He then kept his place right up to the Final.

Veteran...Egypt's Essam El Hadary

DEAN BOUZANIS

Melbourne City's goalkeeper received a five-match ban for using a racial slur against Melbourne Victory's Besart Berisha after appearing to call the Albanian striker a "gypsy".

Offensive...Dean Bouzanis of Melbourne City

HAKAN CALHANOGLU

The Bayer Leverkusen midfielder will serve a four-month ban after he was found guilty of breaching a contract with Trabzonspor, who he had agreed to sign for as a teenager before opting instead to extend his contract with German club Karlsruher.

Banned...Bayer Leverkusen's Hakan Calhanoglu

CAMEROON'S REFUSENIKS

Joel Matip (Liverpool), Allan Nyom (West Brom), Andre Onana (Ajax), Guy N'dy Assembe (Nancy), Maxime Poundje (Bordeaux), Andre-Frank Zambo Anguissa (Marseille) and Ibrahim Amadou (Lille) all refused to play for eventual winners Cameroon at the Nations Cup.

JEONBUK MOTORS

They will not be able to defend their title in the 2017 Asian Champions League after they were disqualified for a bribery scandal in which a club scout was found guilty of corrupting refs in 2014.

"They will want him, and maybe his parents, to move near Manchester. What about leaving his friends? What happens when he discovers girls?"

Former Manchester United defender Paul Parker (left) attacks Manchester City's signing of 13-year-old Finley Burns for £175,000 from Southend United

GOALS we'd like to see again

To see video footage of these goals, and many more that we have selected, scan the QR code using any free QR reader that can be downloaded to your smartphone. You can also see the videos by logging on to http://po.st/xgesU1

1 STEVEN DEFOUR
Burnley v Bristol City
Breaking out of defence, he exchanges passes and then lobs the goalkeeper in this FA Cup tie.

2 WYLAN CYPRIEN
Nice v Saint-Etienne
Finishes off some intricate team passing on the edge of the area with a blistering shot.

3 FERNANDO TORRES
Atletico Madrid v Celta Vigo
Controls the ball and then sends an overhead kick into the net.

4 MOUSSA DEMBELE
Celtic v St Johnstone
A wonderfully worked goal that includes a rabona pass from Mikael Lustig and a deft back-heel from Callum McGregor to set up the 20-year-old for his hat-trick.

5 PEDRO CARMONA
Audax v Sao Paulo
Trades neat passes with two of his club-mates before finishing off a great team move by himself in a Paulista state championship game in Brazil.

6 ALEJANDRO CHUMACERO
The Strongest v Wanderers
Cleverly adjusts his position in order to meet a cross from the left wing with a superb volley in the Libertadores Cup.

WINNERS

SOUTHAMPTON
The first side to reach the League Cup Final without conceding a goal, despite Premier League opponents in every round.

MOREIRENSE
Making their debut in a national Final of any sort, the Portuguese side collected their first piece of major silverware as they beat Braga 1-0 in the League Cup.

CAMEROON
With five wins, they surpassed Ghana to become outright second in African Nations Cup history, two behind Egypt who they beat in this year's Final.

LOSERS

HECTOR CUPER
The Argentinian, a cup runner-up with Valencia, Mallorca and Aris, lost another Final as his Egypt side went down to Cameroon in the Nations Cup.

CARLOS TEVEZ
Missed out on the Asian Champions League group stage when his new team, Shanghai Shenhua, lost to Brisbane Roar.

GABON
The first African Nations Cup hosts to exit the competition before the knockout stage for 23 years, they failed to win a single group game.

"I'll use those words to learn and grow"

Sporting's Joao Palhinha (right) after being made the scapegoat by coach Jorge Jesus for a 2-1 loss at Porto

Headliner

Top ref goes overseas

Clattenburg quits Premier League for Saudi role

Mark Clattenburg hopes to introduce more professional refereeing standards to Saudi Arabia after quitting the Premier League to take up a position with the Middle East federation on a reported tax-free salary of half-a-million pounds.

Clattenburg, who took charge of the 2016 Champions League and European Championship Finals, relinquished his role as one of English football's international officials with immediate effect.

"This is an important move forward," he said. "We have professional referees in the country that I am leaving, which has been a big positive. One thing I'd like to do is work with the refereeing team and the president to make this happen so that it will be successful for many, many years to come."

A controversial figure who took charge of his first league game at the age of 25, the 41-year-old has seemingly been overlooked for a number of major Premier League games this season.

> His appetite for the spotlight and his first-name chats with prominent players has angered many fans

A favourite of UEFA referees' boss Pierluigi Collina, he has been allowed special dispensation to wear long-sleeved shirts to cover his tattoos – which include recent additions of the European Cup and European Championship trophies.

His appetite for the spotlight and his first-name chats with prominent players has angered many fans and social media reacted with glee to his departure. "Mark Clattenburg to quit the Premier League after 12 years seasons with Manchester United" was one much-shared comment.

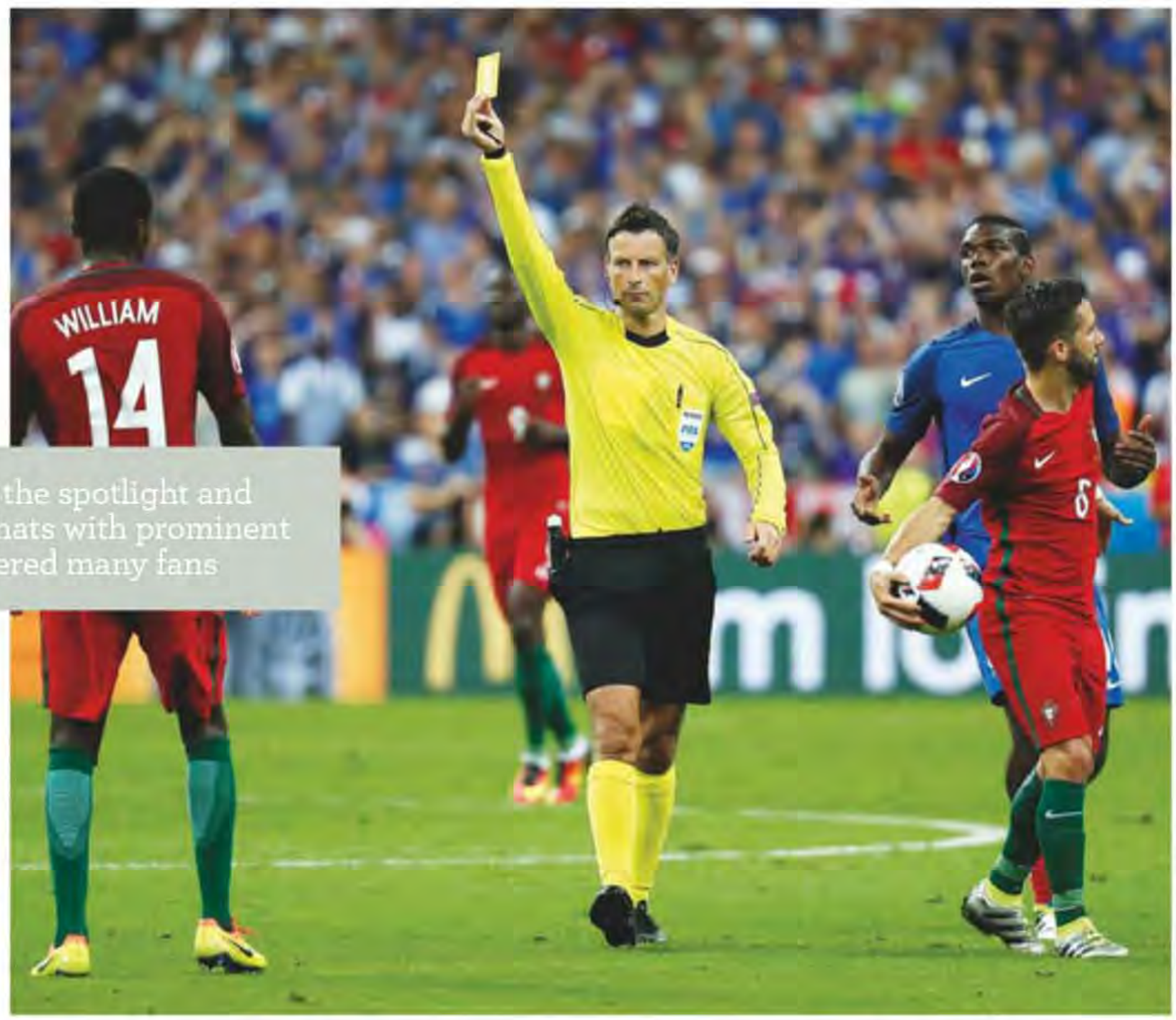
Clattenburg will take over in Saudi Arabia from another English referee, Howard Webb, who is set to move to America to supervise the introduction of video-assistance referees in Major League Soccer.

The use of foreign officials is commonplace in fledgling leagues in Asia. European referees have also been brought in to officiate top games in Qatar's Stars League, while the Chinese Super League, the Indian Super league and Japan's J. League have all made use of foreign officials in the past.

Collina took a supervisory role with the Football Federation of Ukraine in 2011, while former Premier League official Peter Walton heads up MLS' Professional Referees Organization and was behind Webb's recent appointment.

Foreign officials have also been used to officiate the often volatile Cairo derby between Zamalek and Al Ahly for a number of years. Hungarian Viktor Kassai took charge of the latest encounter, in December 2016. Clattenburg had been the first choice of the Egyptian FA, but his appointment was blocked by the FA.

John Holmesdale



Centre stage...Mark Clattenburg books Portugal's William Carvalho in the 2016 Euro Final

Keir RADNEDGE

THE INSIDER

Ceferin rings the changes at UEFA

Aleksander Ceferin has cracked a joke – which is something of an event. The still-new president of UEFA is perfectly and humanly relaxed off-stage, but placed in front of a camera he displays all the excited animation of a decommissioned Dalek.

Hence his humorous aside during a monotone exposition of the decisions of his executive committee passed entirely unnoticed.

The European federation's governing board had agreed a string of reforms which are expected to be approved unanimously by UEFA Congress in Helsinki, Finland, on April 5. These included a decision that all UEFA events and tournaments should be awarded only after a formal bidding process. Ceferin used the word "transparent" but maybe without appreciating that this is taken to mean precisely the opposite.

"So," he said, pausing to look up from his script, "no more political favours...no more political tools for us."

That was the joke. Ceferin plainly still harbours an irritation over claims ahead of his election that he had obtained Nordic support in return for a promise that he would support an award of the 2024 European Championship finals to a northern co-hosting proposal.

A propos of this, UEFA had already decided that a maximum of two "free" slots in the finals would be afforded to co-hosts, no matter how many countries. That had been the first clear hint that a cunning Scandinavian plan – even if it existed – suffered from a critical fault line.

The bidding decision was one of a range of governance reforms, including:

- Creating a women's football division to enhance promotion and marketing of the women's game, including its own Champions League Final.
- Adding two independent members to the governance and compliance committee.
- Limiting UEFA's president and executive committee members to a maximum of three four-year terms.

Ceferin also said that the ranking of second, third, fourth and fifth vice-presidents would be scrapped and ExCo members could no longer expect to be nominated to chair committees as a sort of status sinecure.

All change...Spain (in white) and Holland in a 2014 World Cup group

Joker...Ceferin

This may appear, on the surface, to be uninteresting technical shuffling of the statutes but the fact is that Ceferin, in six months as UEFA president, has achieved more in terms of reform than Michel Platini did in eight years.

It may be remembered that UEFA, under Platini, infuriated FIFA reform guru Mark Pieth with obstructive tactics that blocked attempts to rebuild the corruption-riddled structure of the world governing body.

Meanwhile Ceferin, who emerged last year from almost nowhere, has reiterated UEFA's stance on the World Cup after its expansion to 48 teams in 2026.

UEFA was opposed to World Cup expansion despite its chest-beating crowing about the perceived success of its own enlargement of the European Championship finals which were staged in France last summer. But, as Ceferin observed pragmatically: "We know we can be out-voted."

The quid pro quo for not having made waves with Gianni Infantino's year-old regime in Zurich, and with the other confederations, is an insistence on commanding the largest share of the World Cup slots when these are decided, which will probably be in May.

UEFA, according to Ceferin, will settle for a minimum of 16 slots while also demanding that Europe's qualifiers are kept apart in the first stage, which will comprise 16 groups of three teams.

He said: "We can push and be out-voted but we think it is realistic to ask for 16 slots at least, plus another condition that each European team is in different groups. Then, if it is true that we are so good, that quality is on our side, I think all 16 can qualify."

Frankly, 16 out of 48 sounds an extremely modest target and in stating his aim Ceferin may be accused of revealing his negotiating hand far too early.

Still, that's the price of transparency...

Mutko in the firing line

Russian sport's plethora of critics has deputy prime minister Vitaly Mutko firmly in its sights, with the 58-year-old painted as the devil incarnate behind the doping and cover-up system which convulsed the Olympic movement before the Games in Rio last summer.

Despite his angry denials, this has raised speculation over whether he will pass the eligibility test in his pursuit of re-election to FIFA Council in May.

Mutko has been one of Russian president Vladimir Putin's most loyal acolytes, all the way from their days together in St Petersburg. He is a long-serving member of not only FIFA Council but also of UEFA's governing executive committee.

On top of that Mutko is head of the Russian Football Union and president of the next year's World Cup organising committee – which is also responsible for this summer's Confederations Cup.

The critics' case against Mutko is predicated on the report into the Russian doping scandal which was generated by Richard McLaren, a Canadian law professor, for the World Anti-Doping Agency.

The contents of the report add up to a condemnation of long-time cheating which the Russians have failed to refute.

Mutko's status as highly active sports minister from 2008 until last autumn has placed him in the line of fire, but it's hard to imagine FIFA kicking him out so close to the World Cup. It should also be pointed out that McLaren's 38-page report does not point an accusing finger directly at Mutko.

McLaren has said he had one "unhelpful" conversation with Mutko during an initial investigation and has said he assumes it would have been impossible for Mutko not to have known what was going on further down the Russian sporting system. However, his definitive, final report included only one mention of Mutko, with reference to a vain attempt to arrange a further meeting, his executive summary does not talk of a "state-sponsored" plot but "an institutional conspiracy".

Obviously this has greater significance than mere semantics since it edges responsibility away from Russia's governing politicians.

Confident... Vitaly Mutko

Asked directly about Mutko's responsibility and whether Russia should be stripped of the World Cup, McLaren said: "I don't have an opinion. That's up to other people.

"They should look at the report and draw their own opinions."

Boycott... Liverpool fans

Better late...

Big of Liverpool to ban reporters from *The Sun* newspaper some 28 years after its disgraceful front page about events at Hillsborough.

It might have been more comforting to the poor, bereaved families had the club done so at the time.

The most significant gesture remains evident in the newspaper's (lack of) sales on Merseyside.

MOVERS & SHAKERS

Keeping tabs on the blazers

ANGEL MARIA VILLAR LLONA

The Spaniard was sacked as president of the FIFA Referees' Committee and replaced by Italian Pierluigi Collina.

ISSA HAYATOU

The CAF president is seeking re-election (see page 67).

DIEGO MARADONA

Invite...Infantino (left) and Maradona

The 56-year-old Argentinian accepted an invitation from FIFA president Gianni Infantino to become an ambassador for the world governing body. According to FIFA, Maradona – who was banned by FIFA after failing a drugs test at the 1994 World Cup – will work on "relevant development projects".

ZVONIMIR BOBAN

Clear...Boban

The Croatian, who is FIFA's deputy general secretary, distanced himself from Marco Van Basten's radical proposals for the game, saying: "Marco should have been more cautious in his statements...his ideas and proposed changes were very revolutionary, but it must be made clear these were personal opinions."

CHUNG MONG-GYU

The president of the South Korean FA is bidding for a seat on the FIFA Council after failing to get elected to the FIFA Executive Committee in 2015. Chung, a cousin of former FIFA vice-president Chung Mong-joon, hopes to take one of the AFC's places on the expanded 37-member Council.

"Football, for him, had to be beautiful and enjoyable"

Holland coach Danny Blind salutes Piet Keizer, the Ajax and *Oranje* winger who recently passed away at the age of 73

Loyal...Piet Keizer

OBITUARIES

Piet KEIZER (1943-2017)
Left winger who is fourth on Ajax's all-time appearance list, playing 489 games for his only club between 1961 and 1974 and scoring 189 goals. A European Cup winner in three consecutive seasons, he also won six Eredivisie titles, four Dutch Cups, two European Super Cups and the 1972 Intercontinental Cup. He scored 11 goals in 34 internationals for Holland and was on the bench for the 1974 World Cup Final against West Germany.

Lindy DELAPENHA (1927-2017)
The first Jamaican-born player to play professionally in England, the winger played eight games for Portsmouth, as they won back-to-back league titles in 1949 and 1950, and then appeared for Middlebrough. After his retirement he became director of sports at the Jamaica Broadcasting Corporation.

Steve SUMNER (1955-2017)
Born in England, he was New Zealand's captain on their World Cup debut in 1982. He also scored the Kiwi's first goal on the world stage and went on to play in two further finals. A midfielder, he scored 22 goals in 58 internationals, including six against Fiji in August 1981.

Sam ARDAY (1945-2017)
The first coach to guide an African team to an Olympic football medal, he won bronze with Ghana's under-23 team at the 1992 Games in Barcelona. He also guided his country to gold at the 1995 Under-17 World Cup in Ecuador and had two stints in charge of the senior national side.

Kiwi captain... Steve Sumner

Trailblazer...Lindy Delapenha

PHOTO: COLORSPORT/REX/SHUTTERSTOCK

JANUARY TRANSFER-WINDOW DEALS

€70.5m	**Oscar** (Chelsea, Eng, to Shanghai SIPG, Chn)
€40m	**Julian Draxler** (Wolfsburg, Ger, to Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)
€32m	**Gabriel Jesus** (Palmeiras, Bra, to Manchester City, Eng)
€30m	**Goncalo Guedes** (Benfica, Por, to Paris Saint-Germain, Fra)
€29.3m	**Dimitri Payet** (West Ham United, Eng, to Marseille, Fra)
€23.3m	**Odion Ighalo** (Watford, Eng, to Changchun Yatai, Chn)
€22.9m	**Morgan Schneiderlin** (Manchester United, Eng, to Everton, Eng)
€20.4m	**Zhang Chengdong** (Beijing Guoan, Chn, to Hebei China, Chn)
€20m	**Axel Witsel** (Zenit, Rus, to Tianjin Quanjian, Chn)
€18m	**Leonardo Pavoletti** (Genoa, Ita, to Napoli, Ita)
€18m	**Alexandre Pato** (Villarreal, Spa, to Tianjin Quanjian, Chn)
€17m	**Manolo Gabbiadini** (Napoli, Ita, to Southampton, Eng)
€17.6m	**Wilfred Ndidi** (Genk, Blg, to Leicester City, Eng)
€16m	**Memphis Depay** (Manchester United, Eng, to Lyon, Fra)
€15.1m	**Robbie Brady** (Norwich City, Eng, to Burnley, Eng)
€15m	**Mattia Caldara** (Atalanta, Ita, to Juventus, Ita)
€15m	**Helder Costa** (Benfica, Por, to Wolverhampton Wanderers, Eng)
€13.9m	**Saido Berahino** (West Bromwich Albion, Eng, to Stoke City, Eng)
€13.8m	**Jeffrey Schlupp** (Leicester City, Eng, to Crystal Palace, Eng)
€13.5m	**Leon Bailey** (Genk, Blg, to Bayer Leverkusen, Ger)
€12.8m	**Luka Milivojevic** (Olympiakos, Gre, to Crystal Palace, Eng)
€12.5m	**Yunus Malli** (Mainz, Ger, to Wolfsburg, Ger)
€12m	**Riechedly Bazoer** (Ajax, Hol, to Wolfsburg, Ger)
€12m	**David Neres** (Sao Paulo, Bra, to Ajax, Hol)
€12m	**Robert Snodgrass** (Hull City, Eng, to West Ham United, Eng)
€11.8m	**Patrick Van Aanholt** (Sunderland, Eng, to Crystal Palace, Eng)
€11.5m	**Jake Livermore** (Hull City, Eng, to West Bromwich Albion, Eng)
€11.45m	**Cui Min** (Yanbian, Chn, to Shenzhen, Chn)
€10.5m	**Miguel Borja** (Atletico Nacional, Col, to Palmeiras, Bra)
€10.5m	**Scott Hogan** (Brentford, Eng, to Aston Villa, Eng)
€10.5m	**Luka Milivojevic** (Olympiakos, Gre, to Crystal Palace, Eng)
€10.5m	**Kwon Kyung-won Kwon** (Al Ahli, UAE, to Tianjin Quanjian, Chn)
€10.5m	**Carlos Tevez** (Boca Juniors, Arg, to Shanghai Shenhua, Chn)
€10m	**Rodolfo Pizarro** (Pachuca, Mex, to Guadalajara, Mex)
€10m	**Dayot Upamecano** (Red Bull Salzburg, Aut, RB Leipzig, Ger)
€9.2m	**Jose Fonte** (Southampton, Eng, to West Ham United, Eng)
€9.2m	**Walace** (Gremio, Bra, to Hamburg, Ger)
€9m	**Morgan Sanson** (Montpellier, Fra, to Marseille, Fra)
€9m	**Kamil Grosicki** (Rennes, Fra, to Hull City, Eng)
€8.8m	**Ademola Lookman** (Charlton Athletic, Eng, to Everton, Eng)
€8.6m	**Alexander Isak** (AIK, Swe, to Borussia Dortmund, Ger)
€8.5m	**Jorge** (Regatas, Bra, to Monaco, Fra)
€8.5m	**Oscar Romero** (Racing, Arg, to Shanghai Shenhua, Chn)
€8.5m	**Sun Shilin** (Liaoning, Chn, to Shanghai Shenhua, Chn)
€8m	**Tomas Rincon** (Torino, Ita, to Juventus, Ita)
€8m	**Hernanes** (Juventus, Ita, to Hebei China Fortune, Chn)
€7.5m	**Miguel Almiron** (Lanus, Arg, to Atlanta United, USA)
€7.5m	**Timothee Kolodziejczak** (Sevilla, Spa, to Borussia Monchengladbach, Ger)
€7.1m	**Rudy Gestede** (Aston Villa, Eng, to Middlesbrough, Eng)
€7m	**Odil Ahmedov** (Krasnodar, Rus, to Shanghai SIPG, Chn)
€7m	**Anwar El Ghazi** (Ajax, Hol, to Lille, Fra)
€6.9m	**Patrick Bamford** (Chelsea, Eng, to Middlesbrough, Eng)

A full list of transfer is at worldsoccer.com

"Argentinian football is in pieces. Grondona took it with him to his grave"

Diego Maradona (right) blames the scandal-ridden state of the national game on late federation chief Julio Grondona

JANUARY LOAN DEALS

Demba Ba (Shanghai Shenhua, Chn, to Besiktas, Tur)
Bojan Krkic (Stoke City, Eng, to Mainz, Ger)
Danilo Cataldi (Lazio, Ita, to Torino, Ita)
Tom Cleverley (Everton, Eng, to Watford, Eng)
Gerard Deulofeu (Everton, Eng, to Milan, Ita)
Juan Iturbe (Roma, Ita, to Torino, Ita)
Jese (Paris Saint-Germain, Fra, to Las Palmas, Spa)
Stevan Jovetic (Internazionale, Eng, to Sevilla, Spa)
Tim Krul (Ajax, Hol, to AZ, Hol)
Lazar Markovic (Liverpool, Eng, to Hull City, Eng)
Ross McCormack (Aston Villa, Eng, to Nottingham Forest, Eng)
Alfred N'Diaye (Villarreal, Spa, to Hull City, Eng)
M'Baye Niang (Milan, Ita, to Watford, Eng)
Oumar Niasse (Everton, Eng, to Hull City, Eng)
Lucas Ocampos (Marseille, Fra, to Milan, Ita)
Kyriakos Papadopoulos (Bayer Leverkusen, Ger, to Hamburg, Ger)
Adrian Ramos (Borussia Dortmund, Ger, to Granada, Spa)
Andrea Ranocchia (Internazionale, Ita, to Hull City, Eng)
Jordan Rhodes (Middlesbrough, Eng, to Sheffield Wednesday, Eng)
Trent Sainsbury (Jiangsu Suning, Chn, to Internazionale, Ita)
Mamadou Sakho (Liverpool, Eng, to Crystal Palace, Eng)
Riccardo Saponara (Empoli, Ita, to Fiorentina, Ita)
Neven Subotic (Borussia Dortmund, Ger, to Cologne, Ger)
Simone Zaza (West Ham United, Eng, to Valencia, Spa)

Paul GARDNER

THE WORLDWIDE VIEW

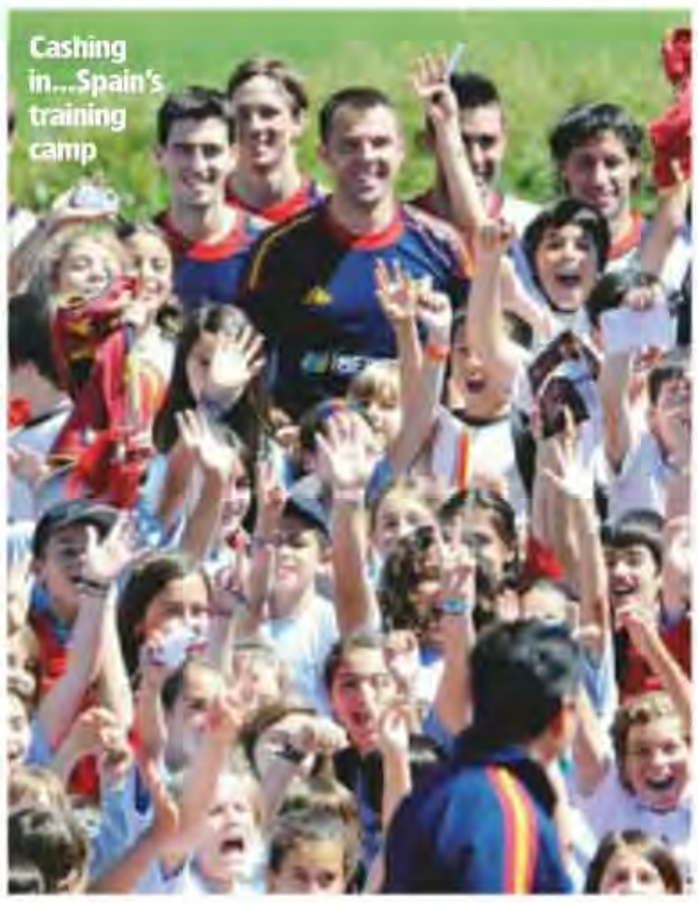
The sinister perils of the "marketing men"

I see the UK parliament is getting ready to take over the English Football Association. Something like that. That the FA needs to move – or, by this scenario, to be dragged – into the 21st century is no doubt true. It does not show up at all well when questions are asked about its approach to key modern concerns such as gender and ethnic diversity.

A 122-member council, its decision-making body, that has only eight women (that's 6.5 per cent) and four "minority" members (3.3 per cent)? That has 92 over-60s (75 per cent), that has 12 members over 80? You cannot be serious, as one of those noisy American tennis players used to say.

So we can agree it's definitely time for the winds of change to roar through the FA Halls. Roar, or at least swish, through they no doubt will. But what will they leave behind them? The level of change required is going to be deeply unsettling for the blazers who have been, for some 150 years, if not exactly in charge, a massively conservative influence on FA policies.

If only there were some way of guaranteeing what comes next will be better than what used to be. The attempts to rebuild English cities after World War Two devastation come to mind...years of arguments between town planners and local councils and a final plan that satisfied no one.



Cashing in...Spain's training camp

Rebuilding the FA will face something like that. A hint of just where the biggest problem may arise comes from the government suggestions – possibly they will soon be demands – that the FA Council (and more particularly, its elite group, the 12-man board) needs to include members from the business and financial world.

Home truths...English football's leadership is in need of some serious change

Over the past 50 years I have encountered quite a few such persons involved in football. I refer to them collectively as "the marketing mob" and, frankly, I have not been greatly impressed by any of them.

> For marketing people, making a profit always comes first. The urge to do that is quite likely to trample on genuine football interests

No doubt my "marketing" label does not sufficiently distinguish the various types of financial expertise, but I find it satisfactory because it singles out the money people who invariably are the most influential. And their influence is almost always displeasing. The reason for that is no secret: for the marketing people, making a profit always comes first. The urge to do that is quite likely to trample on, to not even see, genuine football interests.

For example, in 2011 the USA had a June 4 date to play world champions Spain in Boston. A few weeks before the game came a "Special Offer" from the US federation: for $25 you could attend a US and a Spanish training session. Instead of throwing the US session open to fans, especially to youngsters, someone at the USSF had the bright idea of turning the session into a money-making occasion.

That the idea should have surfaced is inevitable, that it should have become reality is

the worrying part. Football's interests must come first. How is it that they get so easily shoved into the background when the marketeers unroll their plans to make a few more bucks?

The incident I have outlined is only a small-scale example of the way that when commercial thinking gets the upper hand it can corrupt the sport.

The large-scale example, of course, is FIFA itself, whose huge marketing activities turned it into a money-obsessed organisation which was duly shattered when the bribery and corruption involved was exposed.

No doubt football – including the FA – needs expert financial expertise. How can it be otherwise now that the sport is a vast global business? What it must be at great pains to avoid is the crass marketing mentality that is always seeking to gain influence.

A remake of the FA that in any way empowers the marketeers would be creating, not solving, problems. Oscar Wilde described a cynic as someone who knows the price of everything but the value of nothing. We can ignore the moral element of his judgment, but the words are a pretty accurate assessment of the marketing mind. It is not one that deserves a leading role in the development of a social activity like football. WS

Partners...then-FA chairman Greg Dyke and Tim Clark of Emirates Airline announce FA Cup sponsorship

STORIES WE COULDN'T MAKE UP

1 INTERNATIONAL RESCUE
In their Libertadores Cup game away to El Nacional of Ecuador, Atletico Tucuman wore Argentinian national-team shirts. The reason? They forgot to pack their own kit. Fortunately for them, the South American Under-20 Championship was taking place in Ecuador so they were able to borrow shirts from their country's under-20 side.

2 TWO LATE GOALS
Confusion in the Honduran top flight, where Olimpia, having been 2-1 down in added time, drew level against Motagua through Roger Rojas. But as Rojas scored, a fan ran into the penalty area and kicked a second ball past the keeper. Motagua players protested but the equalising goal was allowed to stand.

National service... Atletico Tucuman striker Fernando Zampedri

3 CR7 & LEO CARICATURES
The Las Fallas Festival, held in Valencia to herald the start of spring, features *ninots*, which are giant puppet caricatures of famous people. Past *ninots* have included Vladimir Putin and Barack Obama dressed as ballet dancers; this year featured Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi.

Music man... Djibril Cisse

Festival...Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi *"ninots"*

4 BANNED FOR BELIEFS
Anis Ben-Hatira, the Berlin-born Tunisian international, was sacked by Bundesliga club Darmstadt after the 28-year-old midfielder refused to sever ties with Ansaar International, a Dusseldorf-based group with links to the radical islamist Salafist movement. Ben-Hatira subsequently joined Turkish club Gaziantepspor and scored on his debut.

5 SOUND CAREER MOVE
Former Liverpool and Marseille striker Djibril Cisse has announced his retirement from football, and revealed plans to focus on a burgeoning DJ career. The 35-year-old said: "I loved being a footballer but I have to admit today that football is finished."I will devote myself wholeheartedly to my career as a DJ, producer and consultant, as well as developing my clothing brand."

"Sometimes you see the real face of a footballer on the field"

Besiktas captain Oguzhan Ozyakup (left) is scathing of the behaviour of Robin Van Persie, his former Arsenal team-mate, who goaded him while celebrating the only goal of the Istanbul derby

Kylian MBAPPE (Monaco)

The excitement surrounding the 18-year-old striker continues to grow. In February he hit his first Ligue 1 hat-trick in Monaco's 5-0 win over Metz as the French league leaders maintained their reputation as the continent's top-scoring team, having hit a remarkable 75 goals in 25 league matches so far this season.

Mbappe become Monaco's youngest goalscorer last year at the age of 17, breaking a record previously held by Thierry Henry. And the comparisons with Henry intensified when Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger admitted that his attempt to sign Mbappe had been knocked back.

Like Henry, Mbappe grew up in the Paris suburbs and is not short on confidence. When celebrating his hat-trick against Metz, television cameras caught the youngster shouting his own name as ran away from goal.

Confident...Kylian Mbappe celebrates against Metz

Miralem PJANIC (Juventus)

The Bosnian midfielder was subbed the "new Pirlo" after dropping into a deeper midfield role following Juventus coach Max Allegri's change of formation.

In form...Pjanic (left) and Mbappe (right)

"I don't like the decision, but I'll obey. Worse things happen"

After more than 20 years saying pre-match mass at Sporting Gijon, Father Fernando Fueyo is shown the door by new coach Rubi (right)

OSCAR (Shanghai SIPG)
The Brazilian midfielder scored his first goal for his new club, in an Asian Champions League play-off, following his multi-million dollar transfer from Chelsea.

Jonathan KLINSMANN
(University of California)
The goalkeeping son of ex USA coach Jurgen Klinsmann was called up for the USA's Under-20 World Cup qualifiers.

Julian DRAXLER
(Paris Saint-Germain)
The German attacker hit the ground running following his €40m January move from Wolfsburg, scoring in the French Cup, Ligue 1 and Champions League for his new club.

Aritz ADURIZ (Athletic Bilbao)
The veteran striker scored a 90th-minute winner on his 36th birthday as Bilbao came from behind to beat Deportivo.

WALACE (Hamburg)
The Brazilian midfielder, a January signing from Gremio, had an immediate impact when he scored in his side's shock 3-0 win against RB Leipzig.

Eric BOTTEGHIN (Feyenoord)
The Brazilian-born centre-back has been in fine form for the Dutch league leaders, prompting speculation that he will be called up by Holland.

Maurizio SARRI (Napoli)
The 58-year-old oversaw five wins out of six league wins in 2017 and was described as a "genius" by Arrigo Sacchi, the man with whom he is often compared.

TIQUINHO (Porto)
The Brazilian striker was dubbed the "New Hulk" after three goals in two games since his January move from Vitoria Guimaraes.

Rodrigo BENTANCUR (Boca Juniors)
The midfielder was the most impressive performer as Uruguay won the South American Youth Championship to qualify for the Under-20 World Cup later this year.

Claude PUEL (Southampton)
His side's League Cup semi-final win over Liverpool meant he has an unbeaten record against the Merseysiders in five games as coach: with Lyon twice (won one, drawn one) and Southampton three times (won two, drawn one).

"Equating Messi with anyone else is like comparing a policeman with Batman"

Sevilla coach Jorge Sampaoli (left)

Headliner

Serie A crackdown

Criminal infiltration of Italian ultra groups to be investigated

Is there something rotten in the state of Italian football? That is the question that will be asked over the next two months by a parliamentary anti-mafia commission looking into the attempted infiltration of organised crime into the domestic game.

The commission will hold a series of hearings during February and March with mafia-investigating magistrates from Catania, Naples and Turin, and it will also meet the heads of the Italian Football Federation and football leagues. Furthermore, the Italian Footballers' Association and the chief of the federation's own federal court will testify to the commission.

This is not new territory for the commission. In July last year, referring essentially to lower-division Italian football, the commission concluded: "The ever greater desire of individuals linked to organised crime to become part of club boards, especially in the lower leagues, is worrying. For organised crime, the world of football...represents a useful flywheel with which to attract electoral, economic and financial consensus."

The significant aspect of the latest hearings is that they are not concentrating on the lower leagues. After a number of incidents in recent years, the worry now is that organised crime is attempting to muscle its way into top-flight clubs via relations with elements among the diehard ultra fans.

For example, on the night of the 2014 Italian Cup Final, following the fatal shooting of Napoli fan Ciro Esposito, the man who negotiated on behalf of his club's supporters with police and club officials – in full view of TV cameras – was Napoli ultra Gennaro De Tommaso. Better known as "Genny The Scumbag", De Tommaso is reportedly linked to the Camorra, the Neapolitan mafia.

Other events also prompt pause for thought. How come Antonio Lo Russo, the son of Camorra boss Salvatore Lo Russo, was pitchside for Napoli's games against Parma, Catania and Fiorentina, as revealed by press photos, during the 2009-2010 season? Or how come the Genoa ultras were able to stop a game against Siena in 2012, with their side 4-0 down, and insist the players hand over their "dishonoured" team shirts? Or how come Roma fans were able to climb onto the Olimpico pitch in 2004, on the night of the Rome derby against Lazio, and "forcibly" persuade Roma captain Francesco Totti and his team-mates to abandon the game because of a rumour – that turned out to be false – about the death of a child in clashes between fans and police.

In Turin, prosecutors and the Football Federation are currently investigating the attempted infiltration of Juventus "activities" by the 'Ndrangheta, the Calabrian mafia, who are the most aggressive and powerful mafia in modern Italy. Responding to Italian media reports, Juventus issued a terse statement stating: "In light of certain articles published in recent days, Juventus Football Club and president Andrea Agnelli have entrusted the protection of their honour and integrity to lawyers.

> Prosecutors are investigating the attempted infiltration of Juventus "activities" by the 'Ndrangheta

"It is noted the Turin public prosecutor has recently concluded an investigation into certain families considered to belong to the 'Ndrangheta, who have been charged with criminal behaviour and the attempted infiltration of some of the activities of Juventus Football Club.

"It was also noted that no employee or affiliate has been investigated in a criminal court. It is also noted that...the club has always co-operated by maintaining strict confidentiality to maintain the secrecy of the investigation."

The Turin judicial investigation is yet to come to court, while the Federation's enquiry has not issued its conclusions.

The state enquiry is due for a preliminary hearing on March 23.

The commission may well want to ask the Turin magistrates about the suicide of Juventus ultra leader Raffaello Bucci, who killed himself by jumping off an autostrada viaduct in July. The day before his death, he had testified to the Turin magistrates within the ambit of their investigation into 'Ndrangheta infiltration.

Paddy Agnew

Ultras...Juventus fans

ESM XI

EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

JANUARY 2017

HOW IT WORKS
Every month, journalists from each member of the European Sports Media group select their first XI based on the best individual performances from Europe's top competitions. For details of how each ESM member voted, visit worldsoccer.com/esm11

SEASON RANKINGS
Cumulative votes through the season

GOALKEEPERS

Thibaut COURTOIS (Chelsea)	22
Jan OBLAK (Atletico Madrid)	10
Gianluigi DONNARUMMA (Milan)	7
David DE GEA (Manchester United)	5
Gianluigi BUFFON (Juventus)	3
Samir HANDANOVIC (Internazionale)	3
Manuel NEUER (Bayern Munich)	2
Diego ALVES (Valencia)	1
Willy CABALLERO (Manchester City)	1
Timo HORN (Cologne)	1
Brad JONES (Feyenoord)	1
Bernd LENO (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Simon MIGNOLET (Liverpool)	1
Keylor NAVAS (Real Madrid)	1
Rui PATRICIO (Sporting)	1
Maarten STEKELENBURG (Everton)	1
Wojciech SZCZESNY (Roma)	1
Javi VARAS (Las Palmas)	1

DEFENDERS

Sergio RAMOS (Real Madrid)	17
David LUIZ (Chelsea)	14
Cesar AZPILICUETA (Chelsea)	11
MARCELO (Real Madrid)	9
Sergi ROBERTO (Barcelona)	8
Rapahel VARANE (Real Madrid)	8
Marcos ALONSO (Chelsea)	7
Diego GODIN (Atletico Madrid)	7
Laurent KOSCIELNY (Arsenal)	7
Filipe LUIS (Atletico Madrid)	7
Gerard PIQUE (Barcelona)	7
Djibril SIDIBE (Monaco)	7
Leonardo BONUCCI (Juventus)	6
Alex SANDRO (Juventus)	6
Jordi ALBA (Barcelona)	5
Philipp LAHM (Bayern Munich)	5
Victor MOSES (Chelsea)	5
Nicolas OTAMENDI (Manchester City)	5
Stefan SAVIC (Atletico Madrid)	5
Hector BELLERIN (Arsenal)	4
Gary CAHILL (Chelsea)	4
Giorgio CHIELLINI (Juventus)	4
Kamil GLIK (Monaco)	4
Raphael GUERRERO (Borussia Dortmund)	4
James MILNER (Liverpool)	4
Daniele RUGANI (Juventus)	4
Samuel UMTITI (Barcelona)	4
Kyle WALKER (Tottenham Hotspur)	4
David ALABA (Bayern Munich)	3
Dani ALVES (Juventus)	3
Nathaniel CLYNE (Liverpool)	3
Mats HUMMELS (Bayern Munich)	3
MIRANDA (Internazionale)	3
Sokratis PAPASTATHOPOULOS (B D'mund)	3
Nicolas PAREJA (Sevilla)	3
Ricardo PEREIRA (Nice)	3
Toby ALDERWEIRELD (Tottenham Hotspur)	2
Sead KOLASINAC (Schalke)	2
Kostas MANOLAS (Roma)	2
Benjamin MENDY (Monaco)	2
Thomas MEUNIER (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Shkodran MUSTAFI (Arsenal)	2
PEPE (Real Madrid)	2
Thiago SILVA (Paris Saint-Germain)	2
Antonio VALENCIA (Manchester United)	2
Raul ALBIOL (Napoli)	1
Leighton BAINES (Everton)	1
Andrea BARZAGLI (Juventus)	1
Mattia CALDARA (Atalanta)	1
Joao CANCELO (Valencia)	1
Daniel CARVAJAL (Real Madrid)	1
Seamus COLEMAN (Everton)	1
Danilo D'AMBROSIO (Internazionale)	1
DANILO (Real Madrid)	1
DANTE (Nice)	1
Stefan DE VRIJ (Lazio)	1
Federico FAZIO (Roma)	1
FELIPE (Porto)	1
Jonas HECTOR (Cologne)	1
Benedikt HOWEDES (Schalke)	1
Stefan ILSANKER (RB Leipzig)	1
Branislav IVANOVIC (Chelsea)	1
JEMERSON (Monaco)	1
Phil JONES (Manchester United)	1
JUANFRAN (Atletico Madrid)	1
Dejan LOVREN (Liverpool)	1
MARIANO (Sevilla)	1
Inigo MARTINEZ (Real Sociedad)	1
Joel MATIP (Liverpool)	1
NACHO (Real Madrid)	1
Cesar NAVAS (Rostov)	1
Winston REID (West Ham United)	1
Marcel RISSE (Cologne)	1
Antonio RUDIGER (Roma)	1
Marcel SCHMELZER (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Nelson SEMEDO (Benfica)	1
Kostas STAFYLIDIS (Augsburg)	1
Jan VERTONGHEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	1
Jesus VALLEJO (Eintracht Frankfurt)	1
Virgil VAN DIJK (Southampton)	1

MIDFIELDERS

N'Golo KANTE (Chelsea)	14
Philippe COUTINHO (Liverpool)	11
Eden HAZARD (Chelsea)	11
Dele ALLI (Tottenham Hotspur)	9
Kevin DE BRUYNE (Manchester City)	9
Emil FORSBERG (RB Leipzig)	9
Yannick FERREIRA CARRASCO (At Madrid)	7
Joshua KIMMICH (Bayern Munich)	7
Luka MODRIC (Real Madrid)	7
THIAGO Alcantara (Bayern Munich)	7
Adam LALLANA (Liverpool)	5
SON Heung-min (Tottenham Hotspur)	5
Bernardo SILVA (Monaco)	4
Naby KEITA (RB Leipzig)	4
Steven N'ZONZI (Sevilla)	4
Mesut OZIL (Arsenal)	4
Miralem PJANIC (Juventus)	4
SUSO (Milan)	4
Tiemoue BAKAYOKO (Monaco)	3
Sergio BUSQUETS (Barcelona)	3
Christian ERIKSEN (Tottenham Hotspur)	3
Toni KROOS (Real Madrid)	3
ARDA Turan (Barcelona)	2
FABINHO (Monaco)	2
FERNANDINHO (Manchester City)	2
Ilkay GUNDOGAN (Manchester City)	2
Marek HAMSIK (Napoli)	2
JOAO MARIO (Internazionale)	2
KOKE (Atletico Madrid)	2
Mateo KOVACIC (Real Madrid)	2
Manuel LOCATELLI (Milan)	2
Henrikh MKHITARYAN (Manchester United)	2
Radja NAINGGOLAN (Roma)	2
Paul POGBA (Manchester United)	2
Ivan RAKITIC (Barcelona)	2
Arjen ROBBEN (Bayern Munich)	2
Julian WEIGL (Borussia Dortmund)	2
Georginio WIJNALDUM (Liverpool)	2
Felipe ANDERSON (Lazio)	1
Karim EL AHMADI (Feyenoord)	1
Michael CARRICK (Manchester United)	1
DANILO (Porto)	1
Cesc FABREGAS (Chelsea)	1
GABI (Atletico Madrid)	1
Jordan HENDERSON (Liverpool)	1
Vicente IBORRA (Sevilla)	1
Stevan JOVETIC (Sevilla)	1
Sami KHEDIRA (Juventus)	1

Gelson MARTINS (Sporting)	1
PIZZI (Benfica)	1
RAFINHA (Barcelona)	1
Marco REUS (Borussia Dortmund)	1
Franck RIBERY (Bayern Munich)	1
Mohamed SALAH (Roma)	1
Jean SERI (Nice)	1
Gylfi SIGURDSSON (Swansea City)	1
Tonny VILHENA (Feyenoord)	1

FORWARDS

Lionel MESSI (Barcelona)	21
Edinson CAVANI (Paris Saint-Germain)	16
Edin DZEKO (Roma)	13
Cristiano RONALDO (Real Madrid)	13
Diego COSTA (Chelsea)	12
Dries MERTENS (Napoli)	12
Gonzalo HIGUAIN (Juventus)	11
Alexis SANCHEZ (Arsenal)	10
Zlatan IBRAHIMOVIC (Manchester United)	9
Anthony MODESTE (Cologne)	8
Mauro ICARDI (Internazionale)	6
Antoine GRIEZMANN (Atletico Madrid)	5
Robert LEWANDOWSKI (Bayern Munich)	5
Arkadiusz MILIK (Napoli)	5
Luis SUAREZ (Barcelona)	5
Sergio AGUERO (Manchester City)	4
Pierre-Emerick AUBAMEYANG (B Dortmund)	4
Radamel FALCAO (Monaco)	4
Ousmane DEMBELE (Borussia Dortmund)	3
Theo WALCOTT (Arsenal)	3
Timo WERNER (RB Leipzig)	3
Mario BALOTELLI (Nice)	2
Bas DOST (Sporting)	2
Olivier GIROUD (Arsenal)	2
PEDRO (Chelsea)	2
Jose CALLEJON (Napoli)	1
Douglas COSTA (Bayern Munich)	1
Valere GERMAIN (Monaco)	1
Javier HERNANDEZ (Bayer Leverkusen)	1
Ciro IMMOBILE (Lazio)	1
Anthony MARTIAL (Manchester United)	1
Alvaro MORATA (Real Madrid)	1
NEYMAR (Barcelona)	1
Ivan PERISIC (Internazionale)	1
Wayne ROONEY (Manchester United)	1
Raheem STERLING (Manchester City)	1

"If I want to go to the next level, I need to leave in the summer"

Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang tells French radio he could quit Borussia Dortmund

Headliner

Grounds for concern

World Cup legacy in doubt as Maracana stadium lies idle

It is hardly a surprise that the stadiums in Manaus, Cuiaba, Brasilia and Natal have been underused since being built for the 2014 World Cup. That was generally expected. But what has come as a shock is the state of Rio de Janeiro's iconic Maracana, where the 2014 Final was played, following its rebuild at a cost to the taxpayer of some £300million.

Rather than proving itself to be a sound investment, the famous stadium in the very heartland of Brazilian football stands idle, deteriorating, with its pitch bare and seats missing. Looted by local residents and in the middle of a political battle, the Maracana symbolises so much of what has gone wrong with Brazil's cycle of mega-events and with the country in general.

State auditors found the construction budget had been inflated by at least 17 per cent, the main company involved, Odebrecht, has admitted paying bribes and the then-governor of Rio is now in prison awaiting trial on corruption charges.

Gone...missing seats

After spending so much public money on the rebuild, the stadium was handed to a private consortium for administration. But that consortium – in which Odebrecht are by far the biggest players – have had two problems. Firstly, there is the point that Brazilian football now combines 21st-century stadiums with a 19th-century calendar, with many matches in the state championship, which is played between January and May, simply not attracting enough spectators to justify the use of such a huge arena.

And then there was the Rio state government's reaction to the wave of protests which erupted in 2013 and rapidly focused on excessive World Cup spending. Plans to rip up a running track and swimming pool inside the Maracana complex were shelved – which, argues the consortium, have had a negative effect on their business plan and made the entire operation unviable.

The consortium, then, want out. But for most of last year they were not in charge of the stadium, which was handed over to the Rio Olympic Committee.

During the Games the Maracana staged the opening and closing ceremonies as well as the football Finals. The Olympic Committee was supposed to hand the stadium back in the conditions in which they had found it. But they failed to do so.

With Maracana in such a poor state of maintenance and a consortium looking for the exit, there was no interest in putting things right; hence the current chaos.

In the meantime, a judicial decision has ordered the consortium to carry out basic maintenance. But there is no solution until the stadium is in the hands of people willing and able to take on the administration.

The Rio state government is in such dire financial straits that it has had problems paying its own employees and so has no desire or capacity to take it back. Two companies have come forward wishing to take on the administration of the stadium for the remaining 31 years of the contract: Lagardere and GL Events, both French-based enterprises.

> Brazilian football now combines 21st-century stadiums with a 19th-century calendar

The key to long-term viability is, of course, the clubs and their willingness to stage games at the venue. Botafogo have the Nilton Santos stadium, constructed for the 2007 Pan American Games and home to the athletics during the Rio Olympics. Vasco da Gama have their historic home at Sao Januario, which leaves Flamengo and Fluminense.

Flamengo, the team with by far the biggest fan base, have already declared that they will only use the Maracana if the bid from GL Events is successful. And until then they are investing in an upgrade of a small stadium not far from the city's international airport.

The fact that Brazil's biggest club are contemplating using a venue without mass transport links is a condemnation of the planning and investment options made during Brazil's cycle of mega-events.

Tim Vickery

Damaged...Rio de Janiero's Maracana

"I'm a little sad because I think he still has football in his legs but maybe not in his head"

Pep Guardiola (right) pays tribute to the soon-to-retire Philipp Lahm

PEOPLE ON THE MOVE

Appointments, sackings and loans

IN

T&T boss...Dennis Lawrence

EUROPE

Serie A strugglers Palermo made their 11th coaching change in two seasons, hiring Uruguayan **DIEGO LOPEZ** to replace Eugenio Corini.

AIDY BOOTHROYD, who was in charge of England's last two Euro Under-21 qualifiers, was confirmed as the side's permanent manager.

Former England captain **STEVEN GERRARD**, who played 710 games for Liverpool before leaving for MLS side LA Galaxy in 2015, returned to the club as a youth coach.

Liverpool chief executive **IAN AYRE** will leave the club at the end of February to join German second-division side 1860 Munich.

ASIA

ZHANG CHENGDONG moved from Beijing Guoan to Hebei China Fortune for a Chinese domestic record of €20.4million.

Tough task...Diego Lopez

LUIS MILLA, who guided Spain to the European Under-21 title in 2011, was appointed coach of Indonesia, while German **OTTO PFISTER**, who led Saudi Arabia to the 1998 World Cup and coached Togo at the 2006 finals, took charge of Afghanistan.

ZORAN MAMIC left Saudi Arabian side Al Nassr to replace Zlatko Dalic as coach of Al Ain, the UAE Pro League side who reached last year's Champions League Final.

Melbourne City appointed **MICHAEL VALKANIS** as interim coach for the remainder of the A-League season.

Reigning Malaysian Super League champions Johor Darul Ta'zim replaced Argentinian boss Mario Gomez with Mexican coach **BENJAMIN MORA**.

CONCACAF

DENNIS LAWRENCE, who played in all three of his country's games at the 2006 World Cup finals, was named Trinidad & Tobago coach, replacing Tom Saintfiet, who resigned after just over a month in the job. Former England and Arsenal defender **SOL CAMPBELL** was appointed his assistant.

SEBASTIEN LE TOUX joined his sixth MLS club when he added DC United to the list of Seattle Sounders, Philadelphia Union (twice), Vancouver Whitecaps, New York Red Bulls and Colorado Rapids. Only Dominic Oduro, with seven, has played for more.

OUT

EUROPE

Former England midfielder **FRANK LAMPARD** announced his retirement after a 21-year professional career that saw him win three Premier League titles, one Champions League and the Europa League with Chelsea.

Pescara sacked coach **MASSIMO ODDO** with the club bottom of Serie A. Their only league victory was when they were awarded a 3-0 win over Sassuolo after their opponents – who won 2-1 – fielded an ineligible player.

Eredivisie strugglers Den Haag sacked coach **ZELJKO PETROVIC**.

Scottish Premiership side Rangers parted company with manager **MARK WARBURTON**.

CONCACAF

Canada's most capped player, with 84 appearances, **JULIAN DE GUZMAN** announced his retirement as a player and joined the coaching staff of United Soccer League side Ottawa Fury.

AFRICA

Ghana coach **AVRAM GRANT**, **GEORGES LEEKENS** of Algeria and Ivory Coast's **MICHEL DUSSUYER** all stood down after the African Nations Cup finals. Zimbabwe's **CALLISTO PASUWA** was sacked.

Going early...Philipp Lahm

Lahm announces his retirement

Bayern Munich's 33-year-old captain **PHILIPP LAHM**, who recently made his 500th appearance for the club, has brought forward his decision to retire and will now quit at the end of this season.

He also made it clear that he would not become Bayern's director of sport. Some figures on the club's supervisory board were reported to be unsure about Lahm moving to such a high-profile role.

Lahm's former club-mate **ANATOLIY TYMOSHCHUK**, who won a Ukrainian record of 144 caps for his country, has retired at the age of 37.

New challenge...Norway appoint Lars Lagerback

Lagerback in charge of Norway

LARS LAGERBACK, whose previous international coaching jobs include Sweden, Nigeria and Iceland, took charge of Norway, succeeding Per-Mathias Hogmo who left at the end of last year after a poor start to the World Cup qualifying campaign.

Lagerback, aged 68, was in charge of Sweden for nine years before co-coaching Iceland at last summer's European Championship.

Gone...Dussuyer

Brian GLANVILLE

THE VOICE OF FOOTBALL

I'll say it again: Wenger's time is surely up

Arsene Wenger has lately been under substantial pressure as Arsenal have misfired in the Premier League, with dire defeats at home by Watford, who hadn't won for weeks, and Chelsea, plus a far from convincing home win against a Hull City side who were unlucky to lose. And all that was before the 5-1 defeat at Bayern Munich.

With Mesut Ozil a fading figure in midfield, it seems a bigger error than ever to allow Jack Wilshere to go out on loan to Bournemouth, where he has received the lavish praise of none other than Pep Guardiola at Manchester City, who would clearly like to buy him. Wilshere is that precious rarity, an Arsenal player who, from boyhood, has been developed by the club. Wenger must surely cling on to him.

Pressure...Wenger

> I've felt for a couple of years that Wenger has shot his bolt

A large segment of fans want him to resign or be sacked.

After 20 years at Arsenal, his contract runs out in the summer. With all due deference to the great contribution he made to the Gunners for so many years, I've felt for a couple of years that he has shot his bolt. The club's American chief shareholder is reported as being hell bent on keeping him.

One major problem has surely been that with the leaving of David Dein, who brought him to Highbury, there has been no one to orient or advise Wenger. But a central midfield of Wilshere and a revitalised Alex Oxlade-Chamberlain would surely give Arsenal propulsion.

Gloating from beyond the grave

Somewhere or other, the ghost of the late Alan Hardaker must be gibbering with delight. His nefarious plans all those years ago in his long, embittered battle, as Football League supremo, with the Football Association appears alas to have been won.

To put the whole sorry affair into political perspective, Hardaker waged an unending battle to diminish the powers of the FA, in favour of the League.

In 1958, after the Munich airport crash, Manchester United's rebuilt team was invited by UEFA to participate in the ensuing European Cup, although they had not officially qualified. Hardaker opposed this tooth and nail, United did not participate and bigotry won the day.

As part of his unending campaign against the FA, Hardaker initiated the Football League Cup. Scant interest was evinced, but Hardaker had a trick or two up his wily sleeve and his unquestioned trump card was to eventually place the Final of the tournament at Wembley.

Hardaker then managed to convince the authorities to allow the winners of the Football League Cup to take part in what had begun as the Inter Cities Fairs Cup, but which modulated into the UEFA Cup, thereby denying a position in the tournament to the team which would normally have finished high enough in the Football League to participate in Europe.

Today, the first couple of rounds of the League Cup have sparse attendances. But as the cup gathers momentum, bigger clubs commit strong teams to the task and the attendances increase.

The FA Cup has been scandalously diminished, with teams concerned with their league status fielding shamefully weakened teams. If only they punished teams who put out weakened sides in the competition; though fines, were they to exist, would have to be astronomical.

And so the ghost of Hardaker has continued to gloat.

The 'law of the ex' still stands

Perhaps with his tongue in his cheek, a leading football columnist recently suggested that when a player who scored against his former club refuses to celebrate he should be expelled.

He was critical in particular of Cesc Fabregas, who had scored for Chelsea against his old club Arsenal, who had brought him from Barcelona as a boy and schooled him into the dynamic midfielder he so impressively became. It was a most daring decision by Arsene Wenger, since he had had faith in Fabregas, of relatively small stature, as successor in that role to the big and powerful Patrick Vieira.

> The 'Immutable Law of the Ex', whereby a former player constantly scores against his old team

The Italians, of course, have a very old coinage: the "Immutable Law of the Ex", whereby a former player constantly scores against his old team. But if Fabregas in such circumstances failed to celebrate, why should he not make what was essentially a chivalrous gesture? One surely not worth even a yellow card, let alone the fatuity of expulsion.

Far preferable, surely, to the wild scenes of celebration when most goals are now scored, with the scorer buried under the fervent embrace of his team-mates.

No joy...Cesc Fabregas (centre) refuses to celebrate

Spoilt Beckham is undeserving of a knighthood

Should David Beckham have been given a knighthood? The lack of it has promoted an outburst of whinging and whining.

When one looks at recent appointments you might feel that he would be no more anomalous than some who have been honoured. Yet the idea that he was truly a great player seems debatable. True, he has a superb right foot. I still remember the extraordinary goal he scored at Selhurst Park for Manchester United almost from the halfway line. But as a right-winger he was a luxury. He had scant pace and seldom managed to beat a defender, crossing from deep positions.

His publicised complaints are those of a spoilt child. But as time goes by the so-called honours list seems more and more like a badge of ignominy.

And after all, what footballer was more worthy of a knighthood than Bobby Moore, who never got one?

Honour...David Beckham received an OBE in 2003

Moyes misses out

Managers do such funny things. Like taking his Sunderland strugglers to New York, right after their 4-0 collapse at home to Southampton. Which admittedly followed the bizarre 4-0 crushing of Crystal Palace at Selhurst Park.

David Moyes would surely have done better to have kept his probably doomed players on Wearside and saved all that misdirected money.

MP's should be seen and not heard

It seems to be open season on the FA. Tracey Crouch, the minister for sport, has threatened to withdraw the government's substantial subsidy unless changes are made to the plethora of committees.

Deliver us, please, from preening MPs such as the publicity-seeking Damian Collins. The irrelevant man managed to have in his command just 17 committee members to pass vapid judgment on the FA. One member, Clive Efford – no, I have never heard of him, either – described the FA as weak and feeble.

The only logical criticism to be emitted by this minuscule committee was from the member who deplored the fact that when Sam Allardyce was properly made superfluous as England manager he was reportedly paid a million pounds. Better informed figures have recently passed negative judgment on the FA, including Greg Dyke, a former chairman who cut anything but a convincing figure.

That the FA has made some disastrous mistakes, not only Allardyce, in its choice of England's manager, is beyond dispute.

We have had Steve McClaren, alias "the wally with the brolly"; Graham Taylor, who seems to have been elevated on his recent regretted death to a latter-day saint; and Fabio Capello, kept on at enormous expense despite his manifest failure.

We have seen dithering chairmen such as the late Bert Millichip, who announced that Terry Venables would get the England job over his dead body but miraculously revived after Terry was indeed appointed.

The Culture, Media and Sport Committee reminds one of the old joke that a camel is a horse drawn by a committee. One member of which, by the way, is the ineffable Keith Vaz. Say no more.

Read Brian Glanville's weekly online column at worldsoccer.com

PRO:DIRECT

GLOBAL EXCLUSIVE

ONLY AVAILABLE AT PRO:DIRECT

Packed with the latest technology to deliver all the precision, power and stability you need to dominate the play and boss the game, get ready to unleash your potential in this stunning black, pink and blue adidas ACE 17+ Purecontrol.

Available only from the World's Largest Boot Room, the laceless boot for the purest touch features a Purecontrol finish for total control, a Purecut sock system for stability, and the ultimate energy return of boost so you can go longer than the rest.

NEW VAMP CONSTRUCTION

New "Frankenstein" construction zig-zags different Primeknit patterns together to incorperate zones.

ADIDAS ACE 17+ PURECONTROL FG

QR: 144549 - **£230**

BOOST INSOLE

Combines with boost strobel board to provide thickness required for energy-returning boost effect. Cut outs give you a more direct feel of boost material.

LIVE PRODIRECTSOCCER

NEVER MISS OUT - NOTIFICATIONS ON!

To watch the latest boots being unboxed live before anybody else, tune in to the Pro:Direct Soccer Facebook channel where our resident experts, including the Product Doctor, tell you everything you need to know.

LIVE UNBOXING

YouTube PRODIRECTSOCCER

MISSED IT? Head over to our YouTube chann to catch up on the live unboxings and a whol host of soccer content including:

- PLAYER INTERVIEWS
- SKILL CHALLENGES
- DESIGNER INTERVIEWS
- TRAINING TECHNIQUES
- EVENT COVERAGE

NEW COLLAR

Slightly higher but slimmer and more streamlined, the techfit collar tightly wraps the ankle, locking the foot down for a secure, closer fit that doesn't feel loose or bulky.

SPRINTFRAME

Lightweight and streamlined yet supportive, this strong soleplate delivers rock-solid stability at high speeds.

BOOST TECHNOLOGY

Boost strobel board works in unison with the boost insole to provide the unlimited energy return that makes a big difference considering the average player covers 10 to 13 kilometres in a game.

PRODUCT DOCTOR

Players with a really high instep fed back that the original Purecontrol wasn't so easy to get on, so adidas re-engineered the collar with new material and slightly different patterns to improve the fit and make it even more accessible.

Purecontrol is designed for those that dictate the play and pull the strings in the centre of the park.

KEEPERS

BUFFON

Some players are likened to a fine wine in the way they get better with age. Gianluigi Buffon, though, now in his 23rd year of professional football, is more like a timeless work of art. The more you see him play, the more you appreciate his quality. He's been a permanent fixture in the Italy and Juventus sides for more than a decade, making countless spectacular saves in his immediately recognisable PUMA gloves. "I've worn PUMA for many years, and the new glove fits me perfectly. The front of the palm moulds to the shape of my hand very quickly, so I don't need to wear them in training before using them in matches. They're comfortable straight away, which is a great advantage over other gloves."

Gianluigi Buffon wears the PUMA evoPOWER Vigor Protect 1.3

Check out the full interview on our YouTube channel

PUMA EVOPOWER VIGOR PROTECT 1.3

QR: 141610 - £75

HOW'S YOUR TOUCH?

SHOW US BY SHARING YOUR VIDEOS USING #MASTERCONTROL

eye witness

Mark Gleeson reports

GABON

Cameroon defy the odds

Indomitable Lions triumph to claim fifth title

Cameroon are no strangers to the winners' podium at the African Nations Cup, but they were not supposed to be standing on it at the end of the 2017 tournament.

A team in transition and turmoil going into the event emerged out the other end after three weeks as the new African champions, taking the title against all odds and for a fifth time.

Their come-from-behind 2-1 victory over Egypt in the Final, in Libreville, was the culmination of a most unlikely march to the crown, with a squad that was mocked as being a "B team" after a vicious cull of key players in the year leading up to the tournament and then the last-minute defection of eight players who turned down call-ups.

The Indomitable Lions were only really supposed to be in a building phase ahead of their hosting of the 2019 finals. They now have the chance to build a side capable of dominating the African game over the next few years.

> The Indomitable Lions...now have the chance to build a side capable of dominating the African game over the next few years

It was a classic case of a team entering a tournament without any burden of expectation, finding their feet slowly, riding their luck, taking their opportunities and ultimately proving fit enough to emerge on top after a rigorous three weeks.

Six games in the space of 23 days at the Nations Cup is a tough order by any standards, but in the humidity of central Africa it proved exceedingly taxing, and simple physical conditioning was often the dividing line between teams.

It could have turned out altogether different for Cameroon; indeed it may well have been embarrassing had they not shown some serious strength of character.

In their second group game they were trailing at half-time against minnows Guinea-Bissau and on the cusp of suffering the biggest shock in finals' history. They came back to win 2-1 and then qualified at the expense of neighbours and hosts Gabon by holding them to a goalless draw, although they were saved in the last moments by the woodwork and some smart goalkeeping from 21-year-old Fabrice Ondoa.

Poor...the pitch at Stade de Port-Gentil

Edging past Senegal in the quarter-finals was also something of a rearguard action, with the better side losing on post-match penalties. But with momentum building, Cameroon continued on their way to a first cup success in 15 years.

It was refreshing for the Nations Cup to be able to deliver a decent sporting success story rather than the usual diet of dodgy refereeing, caustic coaches, empty stands and dire football. However, the standard of play in Gabon was not exactly helped by atrocious pitches.

This is a problem that the Confederation of African Football is promising it will fix in future, but as long as host countries are allowed to deliver new stadia for the tournament just weeks before the tournament is due to kick off, so the crisis will continue.

The surfaces in Libreville, which was an existing venue, and Port-Gentil, which was brand new, were both blamed for serious ▸

High five...Cameroon lift the African Nations Cup

Off target...despite the firepower of Moussa Sow (left) and Sadio Mane, Senegal were a disappointment

Shock...Nani (in red) and Guinea-Bissau won many admirers

injuries suffered by Baba Rahman (Ghana), Jonathan Pitroipa and Jonathan Zongo (Burkina Faso), Mohamed Abdel-shafy and Ahmed El Shenawy (Egypt), and Mario Lemina and Johann Obiang (Gabon).

Rahman, who is on loan at Schalke from Chelsea, will not play again this season after tearing knee ligaments in one of the divots at Port-Gentil while Lemina's absence contributed to his side's failure to get out of the group phase.

It did nothing to further endear the event to the European clubs who offer up the vast majority of their players for a month in mid-season.

And the regular cacophony of complaints from coaches and managers was added to by a new phenomenon this time round: the refusal of some players to entertain call-ups.

There were nine "refuseniks" in all – eight from Cameroon and one from Democratic Republic of Congo – who did not want to jeopardise their club status by going away for a month to play at the Nations Cup.

And it is likely that those numbers will increase next time as players are beginning to vote with their feet against CAF's persistence in playing the finals in January rather than June. The weather is always offered as an excuse, but this is frankly not true, as the African host of the 2010 World Cup attests to.

The threat of a playing ban stopped Joel Matip and Allan Nyom from featuring for their Premier League clubs for a couple of weeks during the tournament but, with hindsight, that was Liverpool and West Bromwich Albion being too cautious and over-interpreting the FIFA rules.

A lack of sanction for the refuseniks guarantees that more will stand up against the timing of the next Nations Cup in two years and the tournament risks losing credibility should more stay away.

If Cameroon's return to the top of the African game with a motley squad seemed incredulous, then so too was Egypt coming close to extending their record-winning tally of seven titles.

They, like Cameroon, far exceeded expectation by making it to the Final, and were leading at half-time, although physically they wilted at the vital moment.

Egypt had hung on grimly in the

semi-finals to overcome Burkina Faso on penalties and Mohamed Elneny's 22nd-minute goal in the Final had them temptingly close. But Cameroon took charge in the second half to turn around the outcome.

It meant no record-breaking fifth title for Essam El Hadary but the veteran Egypt

Victim...Ghana's Baba Rahman is stretchered off

Veteran...Essam El Hadary set a new finals record

goalkeeper, playing in the Final at the age of 44 years and 21 days, is likely to hang on to the mark for the oldest competitor at a major championship for some time to come.

El Hadary only conceded three goals at the tournament – one in the semi-final and two in the Final – but had it not been for El Shenawy going off in the first half of Egypt's first game against Mali, he might have missed the record books altogether.

What might have been will rankle with Senegal, DR Congo and Ghana for some time to come, while two other favourites, Algeria and Ivory Coast, face some serious soul searching – as well as the recruitment of new coaches.

Senegal looked the best side at the tournament but, as evidenced in past finals, they failed to make the most of the chances they created, despite a squad top heavy with attacking talent.

They breezed through their group but could not break down Cameroon in the last eight. It was almost inevitable, in the way football delivers such moments at times, that their best player, Sadio Mane, should squander the vital spot-kick.

The Congolese are on course for the World Cup in Russia and will have strengthened their resolve after going out to Ghana in their quarter-final.

That result meant Ghana extended their sequence of semi-final appearances to six in a row but then lost to Cameroon; a result that was followed by defeat to Burkina Faso for the bronze medal.

Early elimination for the defending champions Ivory Coast and for Algeria meant Michel Dussuyer and Georges Leekens both announced their immediate resignations. Other coaching victims of the tournament were Avram Grant (Ghana) and Callisto Pasuwa (Zimbabwe).

Guinea-Bissau were the only newcomers in the field and the small west African country won plenty of admiration for their plucky performance. A point off the hosts in the opening game set the tone for a tournament of shocks. WS

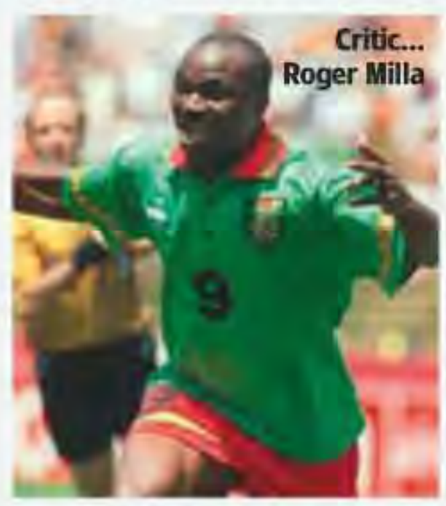
Broos makes winning changes

Success...coach Hugo Broos

Cameroon has always been a country where footballing icons have been allowed to outstay their usefulness.

Roger Milla at the 1994 World Cup finals was ordered into the team by the country's president Paul Biya. In more recent times, Rigobert Song could have been culled sooner than he was after his horrific defensive error handed Egypt a late winner in the 2008 African Nations Cup finals. And Samuel Eto'o, with his suspect knee, was never in any shape to go to Brazil in 2014.

Yet their career achievements meant their international careers



Critic... Roger Milla

went on for a lot longer than they should have.

For coach Hugo Broos, that detail was obviously missing in the job description when he embarked on the almost unthinkable and replaced regulars from the team with untried youngsters.

From the moment the 64-year-old former Belgian World Cup campaigner arrived in his post last February, he set about reviving the national team.

He had little to lose. His appointment was greeted in Cameroon with derisory cries of "Hugo who?" and the mandatory Milla rant about the damning influence of European coaches on the African game. This is the same Milla later seen dancing a merry jig in the VIP stands as Cameroon won the cup.

Broos made five changes to the starting line-up between his first and second games, and systematically refreshed the team after that.

"When I arrived the first thing I noticed was how old the team was," he said. "You have to be pragmatic and make changes."

But Broos' belief in his players quickly bred a strong team spirit. "In the 29 years I've been a coach I've never seen a group of players like this," he added. "They have grown into a family."

Sven Vandenbroeck, his assistant, claimed: "Our success is down to refreshing the players' group. Since we took over last year we have changed 75 per cent of the personnel and we had one of the youngest teams at the tournament.

"It went from being an old and static team to a fresh young side.

"But we also had to show confidence in them and ensure we had unity and we played with a clearer tactical system – a 4-3-3 with two defensive midfielders and two creative players on the flanks. We took dangerous decisions and did not allow ourselves to be influenced by people from the federation or the players' agents."

But while a trophy in Broos' hands makes any criticism difficult to back up, it was a touch ironic that two of his discarded players came on and won the title for the team in the Final against Egypt in Libreville.

Nicolas N'koulou headed in the equaliser after coming on in the first half and Vincent Aboubakar scored the winner with just minutes remaining.

Mark Gleeson

Positive feelings

There were plenty of reasons to be optimistic after the Nations Cup in Gabon, says Jonathan Wilson

Exciting...Togo (in yellow) score against DR Congo

With 64 goals in 32 games, this was the second-lowest scoring African Nations Cup since the tournament switched to a 16-team format in 2000. Only Mali, in 2002, with its dry, dusty and dreadfully bobbly pitches denied Gabon 2017 top spot. However, that statistic is a very misleading one.

After a decade or so of drab football at the Nations Cup – and, indeed, at international tournament finals in general – this felt more progressive and more open, with better football than at any Nations Cup since Ghana 2008, perhaps even before. There was a sense, for the first time in a long time, of an upswing in the quality of the African game.

Such assessments are by their nature subjective, and the fact that this latest tournament felt so positive despite averaging just two goals per game does little other than highlight how goals are not in and of themselves a measure of quality or excitement. But before looking at the tactical implications of that, it's worth first looking at the influence of external factors.

First of all, the pitches. One of the problems with stadiums that are finished a few days before a tournament kicks off is that the pitches have insufficient time to bed in. The result in Gabon was that the strips of turf began to separate, leading to long stripes of soil running the length of the pitch in Libreville, Oyem and Port-Gentil. The sandy subsoil of Port-Gentil was a particular issue, with the pitch there so bad that even simple 10-yard passes became a lottery.

At one point, serious consideration was even given to moving the quarter-final from there to Oyem.

In such circumstances, progressive football is almost impossible. Again and again in the first few games in the Stade de Port-Gentil, players would run onto a cut-back from the goalline only to shin the ball high over the bar as it skipped up in front of them. Long-ball, safety-first, aerial football was the only sensible policy, which is why only one of the seven games in Port-Gentil featured more than a single goal.

Then there was the ball. Numerous recent tournaments have been destroyed by a ball that was too round, with what's good for the game being sacrificed to a marketing slogan that is rooted in the misappliance of science. If a ball is too round and too smooth it does not generate the air resistance necessary for the drag that makes it possible to impart

Struggle...Egypt's Abdallah El Said finds the pitch in Port-Gentil cutting up

predictable spin upon it. That's why golf balls have dimples.

The logic seems to be that a ball that wobbles unpredictably in the air leads to more goals – which, to the simple minds of many of those who run the game, means more excitement and a better product – as it confounds goalkeepers. Actually, it leads to farce, as skill is taken out of the game as players, who have spent years honing how to craft a shot or a cross, find the ball disobeying them.

> There was a sense, for the first time in a long time, of an upswing in the quality of the African game

The ball for the Nations Cup, though, was excellent. There was no great unveiling and it was made not by Adidas, like most tournament balls, but by Mitre. The design was understated but, most importantly, players were able to use it.

Of the 64 goals, five came from direct free-kicks – which is always a good guide for ball-controllability. At the 2010 Nations Cup, when the Jabulani, the ball that would destroy the 2010 World Cup, was used, there were none. Meanwhile, a further 15 goals were from shots from outside the box in Gabon. Of those, not a single one was the result of a ball misbehaving in the air, although a couple, perhaps, were the result of poor bounces. The message is clear: let players do what they are good at and they will.

The quality of goals in general was extraordinarily high, with not just long shots but also great team goals, such as Togo's against Morocco, Egypt's in the Final or Tunisia's opener against Zimbabwe, as well as Piqueti's remarkable run from inside his own half to give Guinea-Bissau the lead against Cameroon.

And even without the goals there was much that was positive.

Recent Nations Cups have largely featured clunking muscular 4-2-3-1 or 4-3-3 set-ups that have bashed up against each other to little effect, with teams set up to keep their shape and not concede. Other than Togo's goalless draw against Ivory Coast, there was little of that this time round – and even then there was valour in Togo's successful efforts to thwart far more vaunted names.

That's not to say defences weren't significant. The two teams who reached the Final, Cameroon and Egypt, did so largely because they defended so well, but each had outlets: Egypt through Mohamed Salah and Abdallah Said, and Cameroon through Benjamin Moukandjo and Christian Bassagog. They continued the recent trend in Nations Cups of the most successful sides being not those with the biggest names but those with the most coherent style of play.

Encouraging...Burkina Faso (in green) beat Ghana in the play-off for third place

Herve Renard ended the Ivorian wait for a title in 2015 after many of the stars of the "golden generation" had retired; Stephen Keshi's Nigeria in 2013 were a largely functional side; Renard's Zambia in 2012 were superbly well-drilled; Egypt's three-time champions were about balance and organisation as much as the individual skills of Mohamed Aboutrika, Ahmed Hassan or a Mohamed Zidan. Here, the performances of Algeria and Ivory Coast demonstrated the limitations of individual talent without a cohesive structure.

But the greatest encouragement, perhaps, came from a couple of the less-fancied sides. DR Congo and Burkina Faso have no great recent tradition of success and few obvious stars, but both played fluent, attractive football. And with slightly better defending in the case of DRC and more incision in the case of Burkina Faso, both might have gone all the way.

The squads in Gabon might not have been brimming with the talent of Nigeria in the mid-1990s or the Ivory Coast of a decade ago, but the general prognosis from the tournament, for the first time in a long time, is optimistic. WS

PICTURE ESSAY

AFRICA

Africans embrace 31st Cup of Nations

This year's tournament in Gabon was watched by fans from across the African continent

Uganda...fans in Kampala watch the opening game between Gabon and Guinea-Bissau

Mali...national flags are sold on the streets of the capital, Bamako, during the finals

Morocco...supporters in Rabat celebrate victory over defending champions Ivory Coast

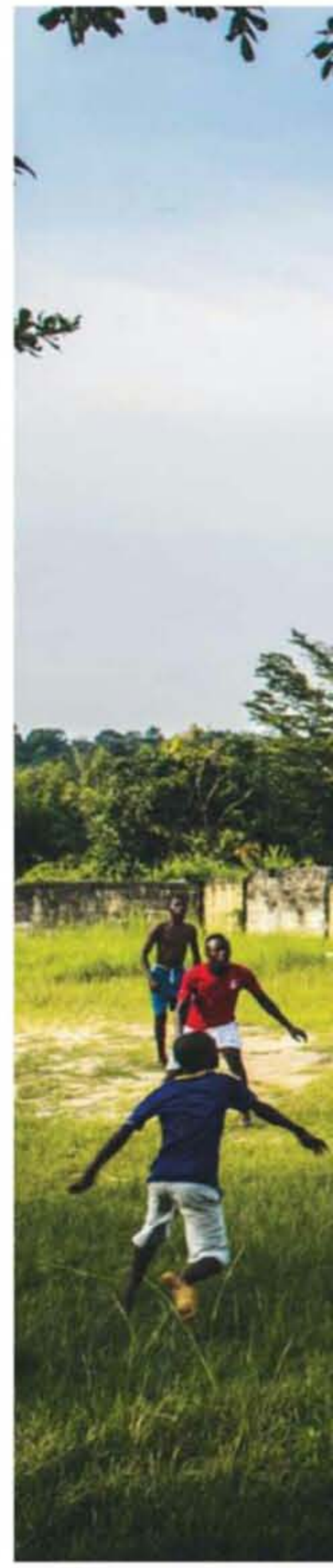
Gabon...locals on Sogara beach in Port-Gentil, where matches were staged at a new, purpose-built stadium

Senegal...the excitement is too much for some in Dakar

Cameroon...victory in the Final provided a welcome lift for those in Yaounde

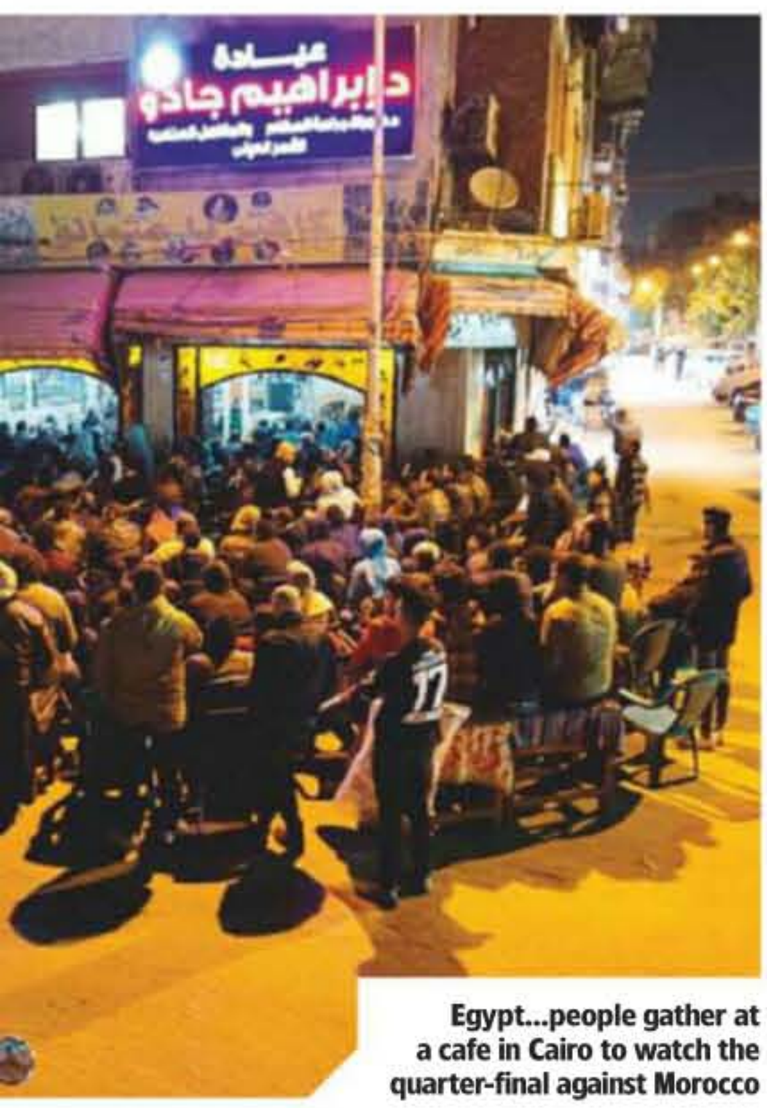
Gabon...spectators on their way to the opening ceremony in Libreville

Burkina Faso... tense moments in Ouagadougou during the game against Gabon



Ivory Coast...a crowd watches the action on a big screen in Abidjan

Gabon...youngsters stage their own game in Franceville



Egypt...people gather at a cafe in Cairo to watch the quarter-final against Morocco

Gabon...a Cameroon supporter is driven through the streets of Libreville on route to the Final

PLAYER BIOGRAPHY

WAR

One of the world's best midfielders had

Real Madrid and Croatia midfield ace Luka Modric is unlikely to ever be heard echoing the words of late, great Liverpool manager Bill Shankly about life, death and the importance of football.

As a child of the Croatian War of Independence his formative years were stained with suffering, and as a result he has always focused on the big picture – the world beyond the wealth, status and glittering prizes of his chosen profession.

While a competitor from head to toe, Modric is an individual of sound perspective; never being discouraged by failure or setback, always taking success in his stride.

Now in his fifth season in Spain, he has certainly enjoyed his time at the Bernabeu, where he is much appreciated for his ▸

CHILD

a tough upbringing in war-torn Croatia. **WORDS:** Nick Bidwell

Timeline

MAY 27, 2005
On loan at Inter Zapresic, a 3-3 draw at Rijeka means they are league runners-up.

MAR 1, 2006
Makes his debut for Croatia in a 3-2 friendly win against Argentina in Basle.

MAY 5, 2006
A 1-0 win over Osijek secures the title in his first full season at Dinamo Zagreb.

AUG 16, 2006
Scores his first goal for Croatia in a 2-0 win against Italy in Livorno.

OCT 4, 2007
Scores in a 3-2 win at Ajax as Dinamo Zagreb qualify for the UEFA Cup group stage.

scintillating approach play and where he has twice won the Champions League, in 2014 and 2016. Yet the 31-year-old also deserves the utmost respect for his humility and level-headedness.

When moving house in Madrid, he insisted on doing the removal work himself and he definitely did not show any delusions of grandeur when having a house built in his adopted hometown of Zadar on the Adriatic coast.

"People ask me why it's only a mini-villa," said Modric. "They want to know why it's so small. There's only four of us [wife Vanja, son Ivano and daughter Ema]. What are we supposed to do with the five or six rooms we don't use?"

Brought up in the remote rural outpost of Modrici, a tiny hamlet on the slopes on the Velebit mountains in northern Dalmatia, his adolescence was the stuff of nightmares. As misfortune would have it, his home region was one of the epicentres of the war and barely a day went by without the sight, sound and smell of savagery.

Serb paramilitaries routinely murdered local Croats, landmines sprouted like mushrooms and the Modric family, led by father Stipe and mother Radojka, received death threats. Inhumanity had become standard issue and, late in 1991, his grandfather, also called Luka, was killed in cold blood.

The youngster, who was only six at the time, had been particularly close to his grandad – who looked after him when his parents went to work at a nearby knitwear factory – and their bonds went deep.

Along with his younger sister, Jasmina, the remaining members of the Modric clan had no other option but to flee, seeking refuge in the port city of Zadar, where they were housed in one of the largest hotels in the city, the Kolovare.

In many ways, the family had moved from the frying pan into the fire as Zadar was under constant Serb bombardment from both land and sea. Danger stalked every corner and for the best part of two years the city was under siege. Survival was in the lap of the gods.

Somewhat shielded by the innocence of youth, Modric simply got on with the job of being a child, making friends, getting up to mischief and playing football. Although he did not know it at the time, his destiny was taking shape.

Shortly after arriving in Zadar, he met another young Croat refugee, Marko Ostric, and the pair remain best friends to this day, often going on holiday together. A love of football was what united them and Ostric also went on to have a short professional career, playing in midfield for Medimurje Cakovec. But while Ostric would end up playing in an amateur league in Austria, Modric went on to become captain of his country and one of the world's most accomplished midfielders.

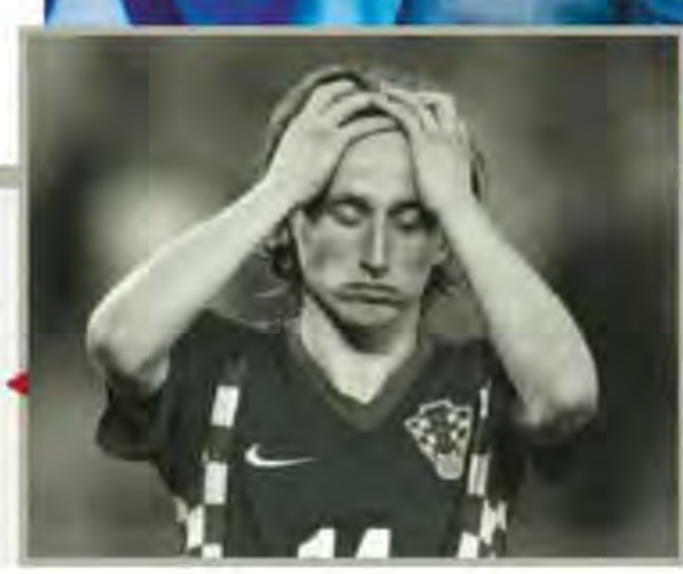
During his time at the Kolovare, the young Modric was rarely without a ball at his feet. Kickabouts in the hotel corridors and on the crater-filled car park were what he lived for, and such was the skill he displayed that he was recommended to Josip Baljo, who was a director of the local club, NK Zadar.

"One day I received a call from a worker at the hotel," recalled Baljo in an interview with Spanish Canal Plus. "He said, come and see this little kid who's always playing football in our car park."

Baljo did as requested, was suitably impressed and duly enrolled the

Dangerous... Croatia in 1991

Humble...even in his early days at Zagreb he was aware of the bigger picture



MAY 14, 2008
In his last game for Dinamo Zagreb, completes a second successive double with victory over Hajduk Split in the Croatian Cup Final.

JUN 20, 2008
Misses Croatia's first spot-kick in the penalty shoot-out against Turkey as they lose in the quarter-finals of Euro 2008.

AUG 16, 2008
After signing for Tottenham Hotspur, his Premier League debut ends with a 2-1 loss at Middlesbrough on the opening day of the season.

MAR 1, 2009
Finishes on the losing side as Tottenham are beaten on penalties by Manchester United in the League Cup Final after the game ended 0-0.

APR 11, 2010
More Wembley heartache as Tottenham are beaten once again, this time 2-0 after extra-time by Portsmouth in the FA Cup semi-finals.

seven-year-old, pulling strings so that the family could move to a hotel that was closer to the club's ground.

Training sessions there would invariably be interrupted by incoming grenades and mortars. They were terrifying moments indeed, with everyone scampering for the air-raid shelters. So, to ensure the youngsters left the field as quickly as possible, the Zadar coaches used to offer a "hero of the day" award to the first person to make it to safety.

Not that it was his speed which first brought Luka to the attention of his instructors. "What I noticed straightaway was his ball control," remembers Davorin Matosevic, who was one of his first coaches at Zadar.

"His touch was soft, velvety and precise. For a novice it was amazing."

Impressed...Josip Baljo outside NK Zadar headquarters

The perils of war apart, Zadar was a great place for Modric to start his career. The club was one of the founding members of the newly independent Croat league, in 1992, and were well-organised, innovative and had an excellent reputation for nurturing young talent. Josip Skoblar, a prolific goalscorer for Marseille in the 1970s came through the ranks there, as did the towering ex-Monaco and Rangers striker Dado Prso, who early in the new millennium led the line for Croatia.

Modric was as timid off the pitch as he was assured on it and his ability was there for all to see. With skill to burn, he was usually at least one step ahead of any would-be tackler. There was, however, just one problem: a marked lack of inches and physicality. He never seemed to grow.

"For me it was evident that he was destined to become a great," says Zadar youth coach Miodrag Paunovic. "He was a ball player. However, not many believed in him because he was so thin and looked as delicate as a leaf. At that time in the Balkans, the key idea was that you had to be powerful to be a success in football."

It was to be a refrain that Modric would hear time and time again. And arguably the most painful of his "too small to make the grade" verdicts came at the age of 12.

A fervent supporter of leading Croat side Hajduk Split, he could not contain his excitement on being invited for a trial. So he was inconsolable when casually told to try again next year.

For a while he contemplated quitting the game altogether before being talked out of it by Tomislav Basic, the head of Zadar's youth academy. Convinced that Modric had the potential to be a top-class professional, Basic took him under his wing. He rebuilt the youngster's self-belief, recruited a personal trainer to work with him and was always there to offer encouragement and advice.

Modric used to call him his "second father" and when Basic died in February 2014 few were as grief-stricken as the Real Madrid playmaker, who three months later would dedicate his Champions League triumph to his old tutor, telling those around him: "Without him, I wouldn't be where I am now."

His self-belief restored by Basic's wise counsel, the teenage Modric became more and more marketable. The country's top club, Dinamo Zagreb, were increasingly keen on bringing him on board, and after impressing in a youth tournament in Italy he was reported to be on the radar of Serie A clubs Juventus, Internazionale and Parma. International recognition would be on the agenda too, as he made his debut for Croatia's under-15s.

Zadar did their best to keep him out of the clutches of others, but they could only do so for so long, eventually allowing the 16-year-old to join Zagreb in 2001.

During his first 18 months at Zagreb, Modric played for the youth team, though for the most part he was unconvincing, combining occasional flashes of brilliance with longer spells of anonymity. A new life in the big city was a major culture shock,

> "For me it was evident that he was destined to become a great... however, not many believed in him because he was so thin and looked as delicate as a leaf"
> Zadar youth coach Miodrag Paunovic

Challenge...in UEFA Cup action for Dinamo Zagreb in 2007

Champions...winning the league title in 2006

APR 15, 2012
Yet another trip to Wembley with Tottenham ends in defeat as they are thrashed 5-1 by Chelsea in the FA Cup semi-finals.

AUG 29, 2012
Collects his first trophy just 36 hours after becoming a Real Madrid player as they beat Barcelona to win the Spanish Super Cup.

MAY 17, 2013
Real Madrid are beaten 2-1 on their home ground by their city neighbours Atletico in the Final of the Spanish Cup.

MAY 24, 2014
Sets up Sergio Ramos for a late equaliser in the Champions League Final against Atletico Madrid as Real go on to win 4-1 in extra-time.

JUN 23, 2014
Croatia's World Cup in Brazil comes to an early end as they are beaten 3-1 by Mexico and exit the competition at the group stage.

and while he had been the crown prince at Zadar he was now just one promising youngster among many. His new team-mates included Croat-Brazilian attacker Eduardo and Vedran Corluka, who he would rejoin later at Tottenham Hotspur.

Of the opinion that he needed to toughen up both mentally and physically, the Zagreb decision-makers opted to send him out on loan, and in the summer of 2003 he headed for Zrinjski Mostar in the Bosnian league, a championship which at the time was renowned for its borderline brutality. With opposition bully boys looking to target him and racial insults flying, it was a tough assignment and a real test of his temperament and resolve.

> "He was a player with a winning mentality, but the club weren't thinking that far ahead"
>
> Ex-scout Bojan Krkic Snr reveals how Barcelona missed out on signing Modric

But he got through it, keeping his cool, discovering a previously untapped physical resilience and was so creatively inspired that he was even voted the league's player of the year.

To all intents and purposes, Modric learned how to be a midfield all-rounder in Bosnia, with Zrinjski bringing out the worker and the fighter in him. It was a tenacity that would serve him well later in his career, particularly later in the Premier League with Tottenham.

Zagreb, though, were not quite ready to welcome him back on board just yet. They had another hoop for him to jump through and for the 2004-05 season they placed him on loan at Croat top-flight side Inter Zapresic, an outfit with a track record of looking after young Dinamo loanees.

Zapresic and Modric turned out to be beneficial for both parties. Modric established himself as the most gifted young player in the country and won his first cap for the under-21s, while Inter sensationally clinched the domestic league runners-up spot – the one and only time they have ever done so.

No longer able to keep him on the back burner, Zagreb signed Modric to a 10-year contract and duly began to play him on a regular basis. At Stadion Maksimir he was rarely anything less than magnificent and would have clutch bag of honours to prove it: three times a Croat league winner, three domestic cups, various player of the year awards and the first of his 95 senior caps, awarded against Argentina in March 2006.

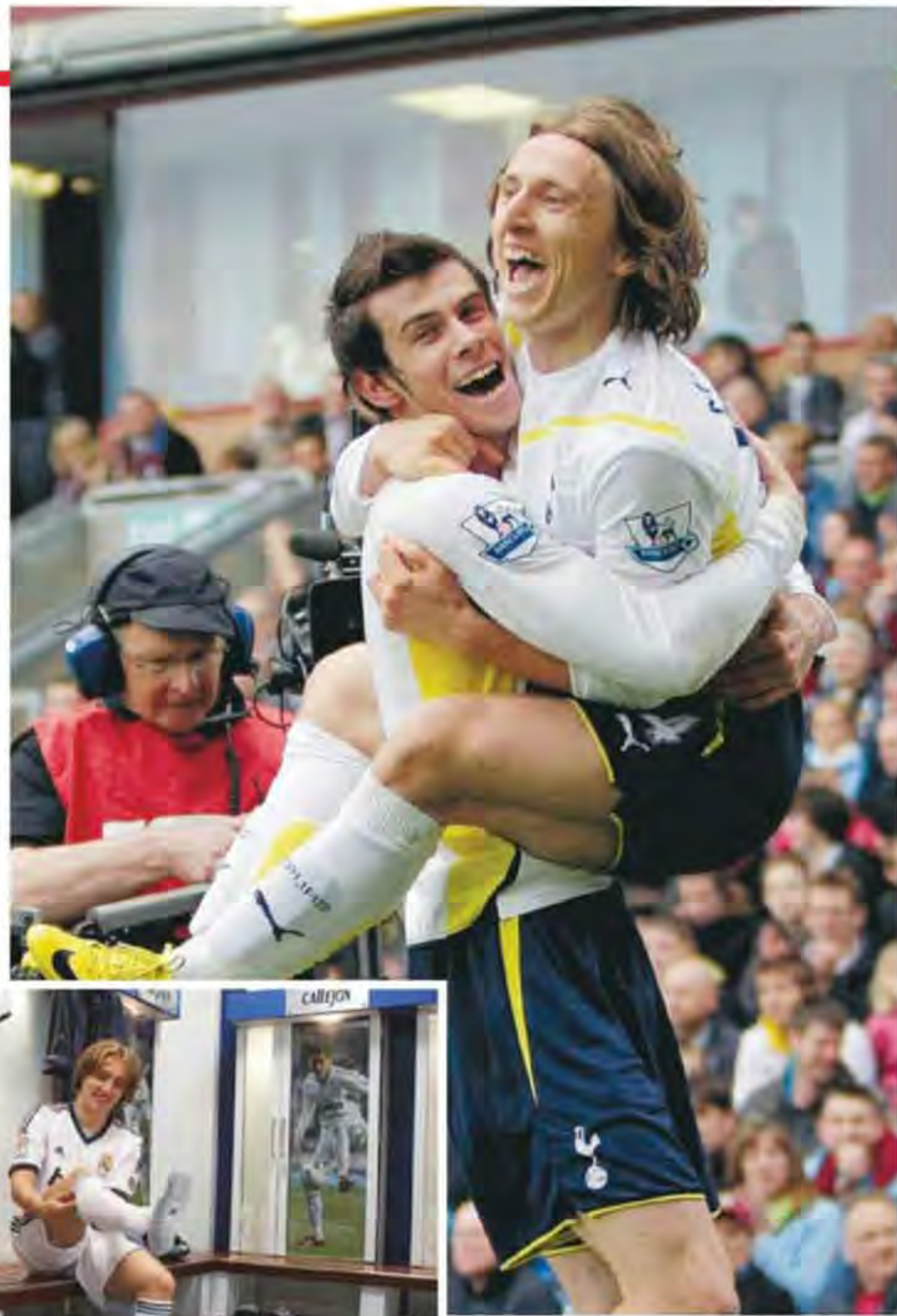
A lucrative move to the European football mainstream was only a matter of time. At one stage Arsenal were said to be at the front of the queue, while Manchester United manager Alex Ferguson was said to be an admirer and, according to Camp Nou insiders, Barcelona passed up a chance to land him in 2008.

"We brought him to Barcelona to get to know him," revealed ex-*blaugrana* scout Bojan Krkic Snr on a Catalan radio sports show last year. "We met him for coffee. He left a very good impression. He was speaking fluent English and came across as very intelligent. Very switched on.

"He was a player with a winning mentality, but the club weren't thinking so far ahead in the future. Only in the short to medium term."

Barcelona's loss would be Tottenham's gain. In his four seasons in England he was poetry in motion and is quite rightly thought of as one of Spurs' all-time great midfielders, keeping good company with Danny Blanchflower, Glenn Hoddle and Paul Gascoigne.

Only once have Croatia placed one of their own on the Ballon d'Or podium, with Davor Suker finishing runner-up in the 1998 poll. If there's any justice, extraordinary everyman Luka Modric should be the second. WS



Real close...with future Madrid team-mate Gareth Bale while at Tottenham

Home...on his first day at the Bernabeu

MAY 28, 2016

Another Champions League Final victory, once again against neighbours Atletico, after winning on penalties following a 1-1 draw.

JUN 12, 2016

Scores with a stunning volley against Turkey and becomes the first Croatian to score in two European Championship finals.

DEC 18, 2016

Helps Real Madrid come from 2-1 down to beat Kashima Antlers 4-2 after extra-time to win the Club World Cup in Japan.

Luka Modric

the numbers game

TRANSFER FEES

DINAMO ZAGREB to **TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR** (2008)

TOTTENHAM HOTSPUR to **REAL MADRID** (2012)

MOST CAPS FOR CROATIA

CROATIAN PLAYER OF THE YEAR

DAVOR SUKER	LUKA MODRIC	DADO PRSO
1992, 1994, 1995, 1996, 1997, 1998	2007, 2008, 2011, 2014, 2016	2003, 2004, 2005

CROATIA

95

CAPS

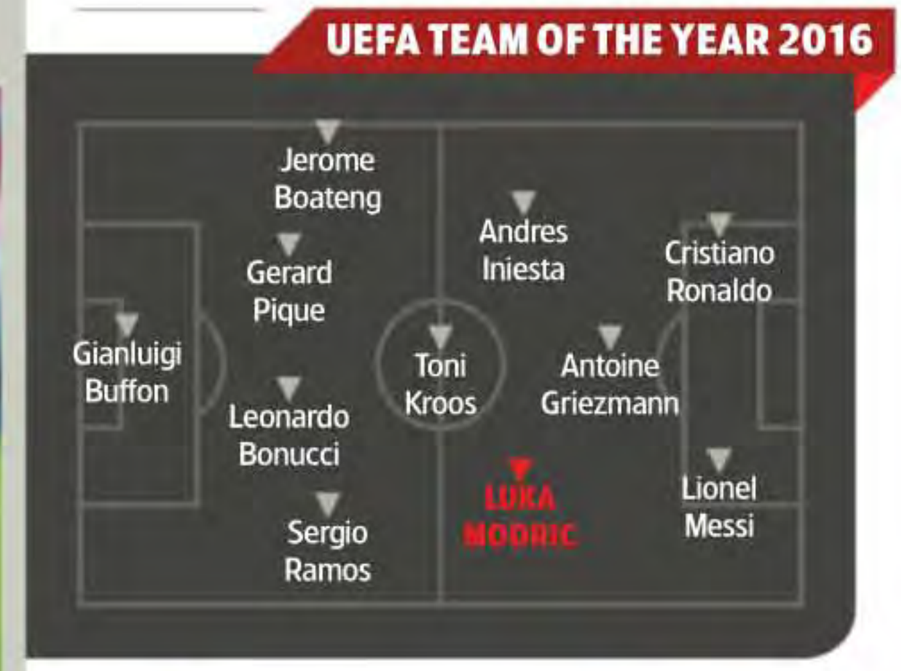
GOALS

11

HONOURS

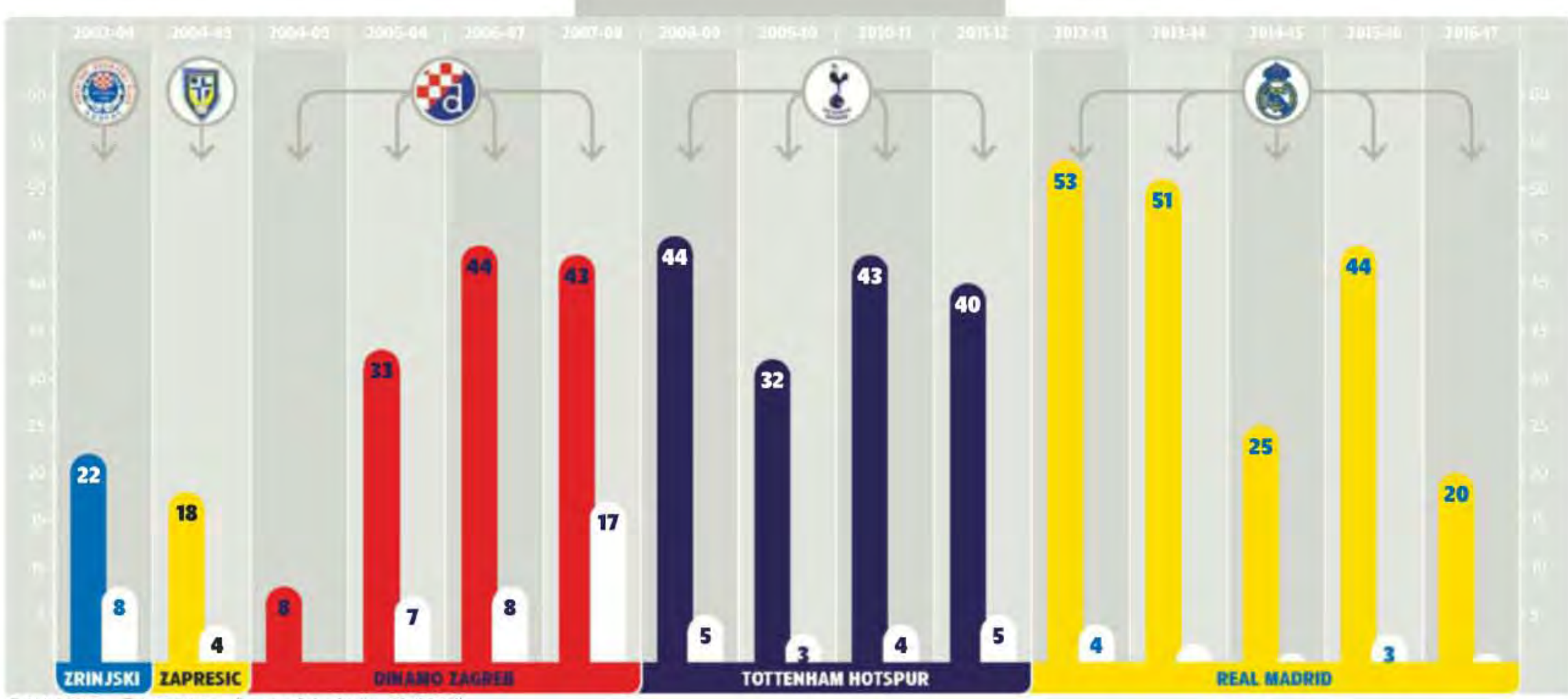
DINAMO ZAGREB			
Croatian championship	2006	2007	2008
Croatian Cup	2007	2008	
Croatian Super Cup	2006		
REAL MADRID			
Champions League	2014	2016	
UEFA Super Cup	2014	2016	
Club World Cup	2014	2016	
Spanish Cup	2014		
Spanish Super Cup	2012		

UEFA TEAM OF THE YEAR 2016



BIG OFFER

Wages he was offered to play in the Chinese Super League, according to *Marca* in October 2016



GAMES GOALS (*up to & including 10.02.17)

SPECIAL REPORT

Packed...Borussia Dortmund's 24,454-capacity Sudtribune

MIND

European football is more divided than ever – and the split

Space...Zalgiris fans in Lithuania
GAP
between rich and poor is growing. Special report by Steve Menary

On the surface, European club football is thriving. In 2015, Europe's clubs made aggregate profits of €1.5billion and attendances rose by 2.6million according to UEFA's latest report. But beneath the sheen offered by those leagues that have colonised the television schedules there is a very different story.

Nearly half of the €8.2bn generated by Europe's top-flight divisions came from the continent's 30 biggest clubs. Yet between 2009 and 2015, average club revenue in Austria, Denmark, Greece, Holland, Norway, Portugal and Scotland either fell or increased only marginally.

UEFA acknowledges a "widening financial gap between the global super powers and other large clubs" and some countries are increasingly being left behind as interest in the club game dwindles.

Crowds fell in the top leagues of 17 UEFA members last season and some clubs cannot even charge on the gate. Stumbras in Lithuania, for example, simply ask for donations, while two thirds of the Armenian league let fans in for nothing.

Like many sports competitions, fixtures in the Armenian Premier League often get shifted to accommodate television schedules, yet broadcasters pay nothing for the rights and can even move kick-off times on the day of a game. No wonder many Armenian fans are losing interest in their own domestic competition.

Memorable...Otelul Galati (in blue) at Manchester United in the Champions League

Even in Azerbaijan, where the game is awash with oil cash, some top-flight clubs struggle to generate support. Inter Baku tried letting fans in for free. But when the crowd figures remained the same, the club went back to charging; money from 500 fans was better than no money at all.

Outside of the top leagues, clubs struggle to command a significant fee for TV rights, in part because the Premier League and La Liga have commandeered the attention of their fans.

"The biggest problem is the TV deal for the Premier League; it creates this massive gap," says Antonia Hagemann, who is head of Supporters Direct Europe, which helps supporters take control of their own clubs.

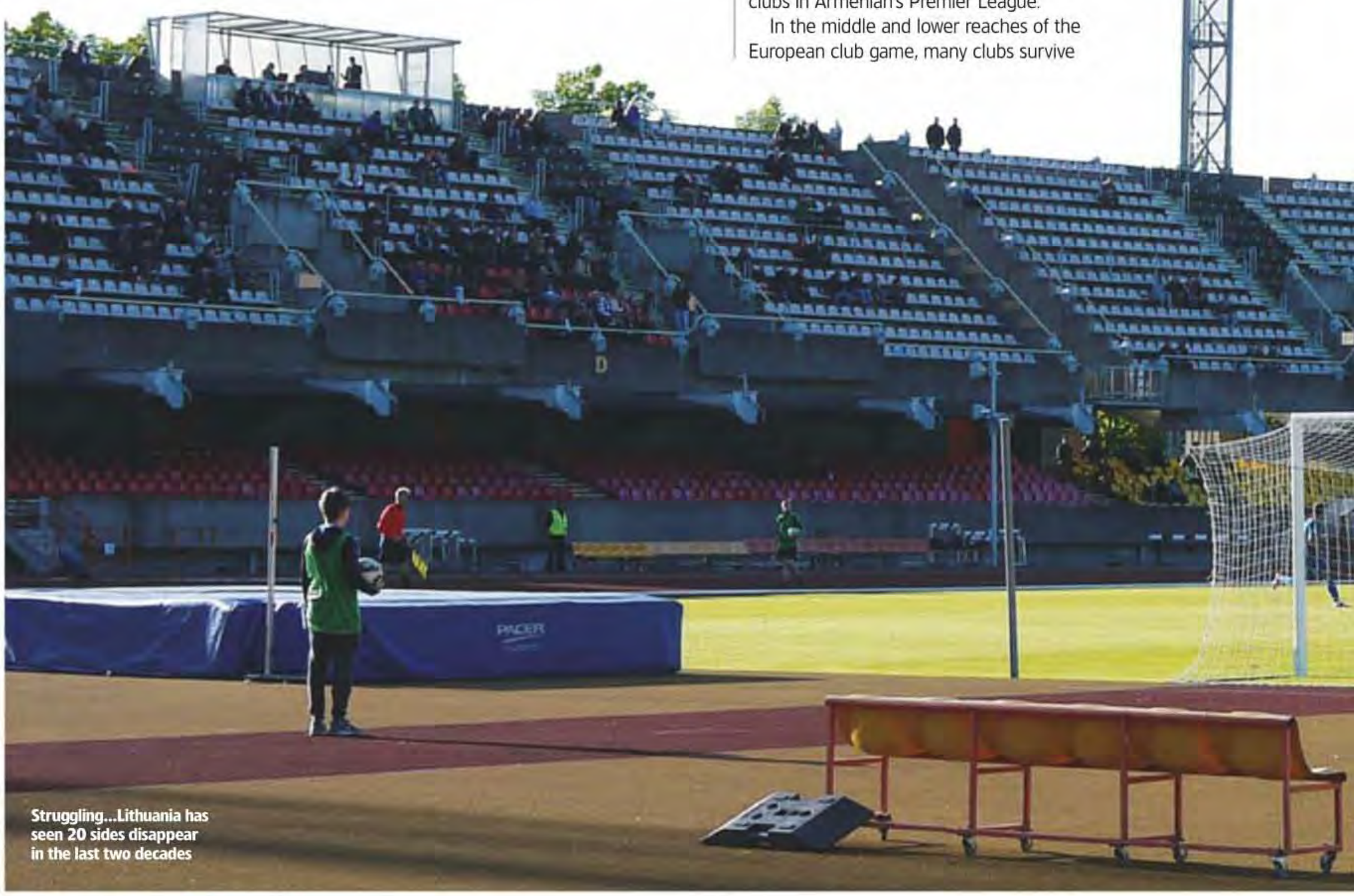
TV money provides less than five per cent of revenue in 32 out of 54 European leagues and this has a major knock-on effect at clubs struggling to survive.

Outside of the top 20 leagues, 55 per cent of clubs are losing money. Of 393 clubs in these leagues, 91 of them spend at least €6 for every €5 they make. In Estonia and Georgia, that ratio is larger still, with clubs there spending €3 for every €2 they bring in.

"In a number of countries, profitability remains the exception rather than the rule," UEFA notes dryly in its report.

Former Soviet bloc countries are particularly struggling and clubs routinely vanish. In the first two decades since independence, Lithuania lost 20 clubs. In 2015 alone, three Latvian sides disappeared and there are now just six clubs in Armenian's Premier League.

In the middle and lower reaches of the European club game, many clubs survive



Struggling...Lithuania has seen 20 sides disappear in the last two decades

through the subsidy of money from UEFA competition. In Belarus and Croatia, UEFA money provided 45 per cent of revenue in 2015. In Andorra, Estonia, Gibraltar, Latvia, Malta, Montenegro and San Marino, club revenue is, on average, €400,000, or less.

For the players, taking part in European competition is often the only guarantee that they will get paid. This season, clubs appearing in the Champions League first qualifying round earned €450,000 regardless of their performance.

For the 44 clubs playing in the Champions League and Europa League qualifiers, UEFA payments contributed more than all other revenue sources put together.

This UEFA money often goes to the same handful of clubs. BATE and Dinamo Zagreb have been the sole Champions League representatives from Belarus and Croatia respectively over the last decade.

At the top end, Financial Fairplay may have curbed losses but it cemented the place of the top sides. And FFP only applies to clubs with a turnover of more than €5 million. Below this level, the losers are often the players, who are also beginning to walk away.

Donations... Lithuanian side Stumbras rely on fans' generosity

Guaranteed...BATE (in blue) have been Belarus champions for the past 11 seasons

The 2016 Global Employment Report from footballers union FIFPro found that three quarters of players earn less than $4,000 a month and warned that "players are usually the first to see the downside of 'jackpot economics'", which basically means not getting paid.

In 2011, Laurentiu Petean won the Romanian league with his home-town club Otelul Galati, who went on to play against Manchester United at Old Trafford in the Champions League. At the age of just 29, according to a report in *The Independent*, he has retired and is doing odd jobs at a hotel in Germany, where he can earn more than as a player in Romania.

In 1986, the Romanian league provided the champions of Europe; now Steaua Bucharest – like so many former Soviet sides that once bestrode the continental stage – exist in name only.

As local leagues fail to attract attention from fans, television broadcasters and sponsors, players and clubs can fall prey to match-fixers.

Tony Higgins, vice president of the European division at FIFPro, says: "Local matches lose credibility because of match-fixing so they start looking for credible matches to beam in. This stymies the commercial growth of these clubs."

> "Local matches lose credibility because of match-fixing"
>
> **FIFPro vice-president Tony Higgins**

Unable to pay players, some club owners turn to match-fixers for income. FIFPro's report found that players in lower-income brackets are up to three times more likely to be approached by fixers.

Gangsters are taking advantage of this financial weakness across Europe: from a Cypriot league so plagued by match-fixing that coaches who refuse to comply are sent bombs, to Bulgaria, where numerous club directors have been assassinated.

In 2015, the Latvian league lost three clubs to bans related to organised crime. They included former champions Daugava, whose 2013 Champions League qualifier with Swedish side Elfsborg was investigated for match-fixing.

The problem is that the financial gap is greater than ever. "There's always been a gap between the bigger clubs but it's about helping the middle class," says Janis Mezeckis, who is the Latvian Football Federation's secretary general.

At international level, the gap – on the field at least – is closing and analysis in late 2014 by *The Daily Telegraph* showed only 10 of the 593 European qualifiers in

the previous year were won by a margin of six or more goals.

Euro 2016 and performances by the likes of Iceland suggest that trend is continuing, though some pundits have lamented the lowering of standards. So far in Europe's 2018 World Cup qualifiers, only six games have been settled by six or more goals. Smaller European countries can find a way to compete at international level, albeit sometimes to the detriment of the entertainment level, but in the cash-dominated club game – even with the weaker sides taken out – thrashings are on the rise.

Given that there are currently four rounds of qualifiers prior to the Champions League group stage, a four-goal difference is probably a better gauge of a thrashing. In the 2016-17 group stage, four goals or more settled 14 games.

Games such as Bayern Munich's 5-0 pasting of Rostov, Arsenal's 6-0 romp over Bulgarian champions Ludogorets or Celtic's 7-0 hiding by Barcelona are unlikely to attract neutrals on TV.

In the round of 16, 14 of the clubs are from England, France, Germany, Italy and Spain. That is the largest proportion of "market share" taken by the "Big Five" in the last five years, yet the European Clubs Association is resistant to change.

"Politics and commerce should not be the exclusive priority in football," said ECA and Bayern chairman Karl-Heinz Rummenigge, without a hint of irony, in dismissing FIFA's plans to expand the 2026 World Cup to 48 teams.

In his 2016 FIFA presidential election campaign, outsider Jerome Champagne railed against what he described as the "UEFA-ication" of FIFA and bemoaned the state of the European game. "Football in places like Georgia is already dead," said Champagne. "People worry the Dutch clubs can never win the Champions League, but look at the gap in France?"

In 2015-16, Ligue 1 runners-up Lyon were 31 points adrift of champions Paris Saint-Germain but only 16 points off the relegation zone. The Ligue 1 title race is closer this season, but PSG's budget is inflated by Middle Eastern oil money and dwarfs its French peers.

Like PSG, Bayern are expanding abroad and have offices in New York and Shanghai, but German club revenues are much less than those in England – and the trend will only continue.

"German clubs talk about getting rid of the '50+1' ownership rule, but even if they do that closing the gap [with the Premier League] will not be possible," says Antonia Hagemann.

Only Spain are in a position to challenge. At the Soccerex Global Convention in Manchester last September, representatives of La Liga made it clear that they were gunning for the Premier League in a crazy race for domination of the world's football fans.

La Liga has 10 offices across the world, from Brussels and Singapore to two in China, and wants fans to split their loyalties between home teams and Spanish sides.

"Rising tides floats all boats," said a hopeful Kathy Carter from Soccer United Marketing, which handles all marketing for North American football including Major League Soccer, at Soccerex.

In a nascent soccer market, MLS is expanding with 10 cities bidding for four new franchises, but this notion of split loyalties is not working among fans in Europe, where many weaker leagues are shrinking.

In 2012, the Kazak Premier League

Shrinking...this season Lithuania's top flight has gone down from 10 to eight clubs

dropped from 14 to a dozen clubs. In 2013-14, Bulgaria's First League dropped from 16 to 14 clubs and Croatia's HNL went from 12 to 10 clubs. The next season, Albania's Superliga was cut from 12 to 10 clubs and in 2015-16 Romania's then 18-team Liga I dropped four clubs.

This season, the Premier League in Bosnia & Herzegovina was slashed from 16 sides to 12 and Lithuania's A Lyga shrank from 10 to eight clubs.

In countries where televised English, Spanish and, to a lesser degree, German football is ubiquitous, there are simply not enough fans to go around. In Georgia, where the Liga is being cut from 16 teams to 10, the biggest draw is *El Classico*.

Locals in Georgia are stuck in a time warp, back in May 1981, when Dinamo Tbilisi won the European Cup-winners Cup. To assemble a side capable of challenging even for a slot in the Europa League group stage these days would mean more than doubling Dinamo's current budget. But if they took that gamble and lost, the club would probably go the way of 15-times Latvian Virsliga winners Skonto Riga, who went bust before Christmas 2016.

"Some of the smaller football associations acknowledge that things are not going right and are looking to engage with their supporters," says Hagemann. "The Georgian and Romanian associations both got in touch with us to look at more progressive ways of running football clubs."

One oft-mooted panacea has been the creation of cross-border leagues. They could, it is argued, act as an alternative to the Champions League or Europa League, generating more local interest.

The idea of an Atlantic League featuring clubs from Belgium, Denmark, Holland, Scotland and Sweden resurfaced after changes to the Champions League format made prior to Aleksander Ceferin being elected UEFA president last year.

A kick-off has been mooted for 2021 to coincide with the end of the next Champions League broadcasting cycle, but the idea has been raised ever since the formation of the G14 group of Europe's richest clubs in 2000 without ever materialising.

"I don't think there will be a lot of Dutch fans that will stay up to watch Ajax versus Copenhagen," says FIFPro's Dutch head of communications, Raymond Beard.

History suggests that Beard is right. Although UEFA has never approved attempts to create the Atlantic League, various other cross-border competitions have kicked off then vanished.

The Scandinavian Royal League won UEFA approval in 2004 and featured the likes of Brondby, Copenhagen and IFK Gothenburg, but was cancelled in 2007-08 due to high financial costs and unsold TV rights.

The Baltic League also kicked off that season, featuring the top four clubs from Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, but that was stopped in 2011 due to fears it had been targeted by match-fixers.

In 2013, Aleksey Miller, the chairman of oil company Gazprom, proposed the Unified Football Championship (UFC) for leading Russian and Ukrainian clubs, including Gazprom-sponsored Zenit and 2009 UEFA Cup winners Shakhtar Donetsk. Perennial Belarusian title winners BATE reportedly supported the UFC, which was a throwback to Soviet times when places such as Armenia and Lithuania often had sides in the old Higher League.

Back then, clubs such as Ararat – Soviet League winners in 1973 and European Cup quarter-finalists a year later – and Zalgiris attracted strong local support as they were in effect national teams in countries without independence.

An ice hockey version of the UFC has been in operation since 2008. "Football is

Romp...Arsenal's Alexis Sanchez (hidden) scores against Bulgarian champions Ludogorets

Triumph...Dinamo Tbilisi won the European Cup-winners Cup in 1981

the most popular sport in Latvia except for the Kontinental Hockey League (KHL)," says LFF secretary general Janis Mezeckis.

The KHL comprises mostly Russian teams plus representatives from Belarus, Latvia and Kazakhstan, among others.

With Gazprom – a major UEFA sponsor – supposedly offering €1bn sponsorship, the Russian proposal would have been hard to ignore, but Miller's close confidant, Russian premier Vladimir Putin, sanctioned a military occupation of the Crimean peninsula in Ukraine. That ended any involvement from Ukraine, but another cross-border competition produced a more significant influence.

A Balkan cross-border club basketball league, the Adriatic been staged since 2001-02 and features sides from Bosnia & Herzegovina, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia.

In March 2015, the Croatian newspaper *Vecernji list* reported on plans for a Balkan league featuring 42 clubs from 13 countries in south-eastern Europe. But instead of producing a breakaway league, those countries came up with something potentially more dangerous to the elite clubs – the candidacy of Ceferin for UEFA president.

> "The new deal between the European Clubs Association and the Champions League will widen the gap"
> **Antonia Hagemann, head of Supporters Direct Europe**

The Slovenian was elected a matter of weeks after the European Club Association – which declined to be interviewed for this article – had secured a deal guaranteeing four places in the group stage from 2018 to 2021 for the Spanish, English, Italian and German leagues.

The deal was agreed only weeks before Ceferin had warned of the need for more balance in European football.

In his campaign, the Slovenian also argued that "only representatives active in their respective national associations can be members of the UEFA executive committee", which was a well-aimed dig at selfish club owners.

Gone...Brondby (in blue) beat Copenhagen 1-0 in the 2007 Royal League Final

Finally, the disenfranchised – and in particular, those smaller countries who at one point in the evolution of the Champions League had even been excluded completely, along with the bankrupt eastern Europeans – had themselves a representative.

Ceferin's victory over Dutch opponent Michael Van Praag was a landslide, by 42 votes to 13, and involved some painful decisions that illustrated the depth of feeling involved.

Van Praag was Gibraltar's portfolio holder during the British territory's decade long attempt to join UEFA, but he did not receive their vote. "It was very difficult as we have a lot of respect for Michael but something has to change," says Gibraltar Football Association chief executive Dennis Beiso.

Deal...UEFA president Aleksander Ceferin

Iceland and Faroe Islands voted for Van Praag but most smaller countries – such as Luxembourg, Malta and San Marino – joined disenfranchised Eastern European countries to support Ceferin, while bigger nations such as Germany, Italy and Portugal also turned their back on Van Praag.

The English and Spanish, whose clubs dominate European football financially to such an unhealthy extent, voted for the Dutchman but the result was an overwhelming vote against the status quo.

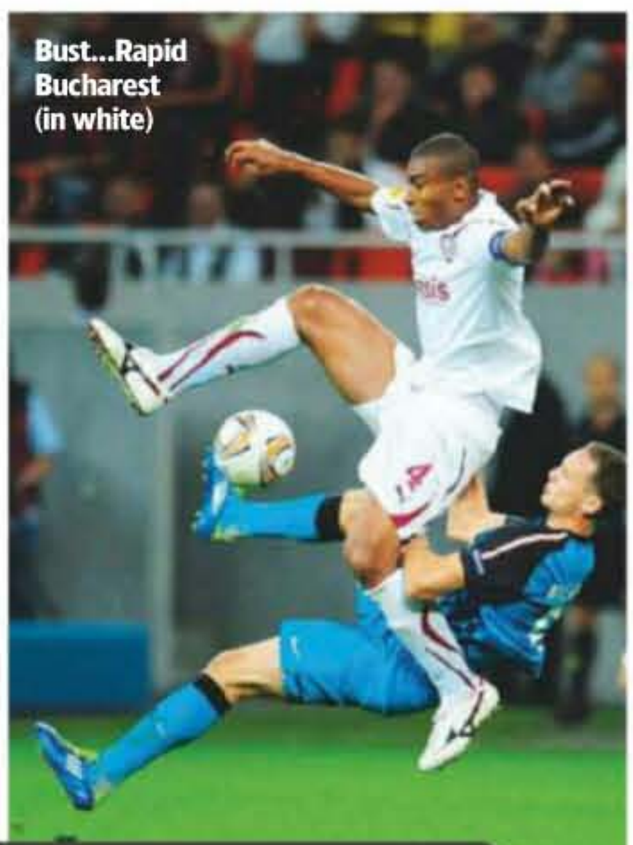
Of UEFA's 55 members, 23 have never had a club in the money-spinning group stages of the Champions League. At least 13 of those countries – and probably more – supported Ceferin. But the actual reality is that they now have even less chance of taking part.

Ceferin promised to renegotiate the Champions League deal but the bluster of a breakaway once again blew down the corridors of Nyon at the December 2016 UEFA ExCo meeting. A new Champions Path will offer greater protection to league winners, but the big countries emerged unscathed. "The new deal between the European Clubs Association and the Champions League will widen the gap," says Hagemann.

Under Ceferin, UEFA promises there is "more rebalancing to come" but the European game stands on a precipice. Change is necessary but European football is surely more divided than ever. WS

Blueprint...Slovan Bratislava (in white) and Spartak Moscow in KHL action

the numbers game


Bust...Rapid Bucharest (in white)

CLUBS WHO HAVE GONE OUT OF BUSINESS SINCE 2010

ROMANIA
Petrolul
Rapid Bucharest
Universitatea Cluj
Otelul Galati
Unirea Urziceni

UKRAINE
Metallist Kharkiv
Metalurh Zaporizhya
Tavriya Simferopol

ARMENIA
Ulisses
Kotajk

MOLDOVA
Tiraspol

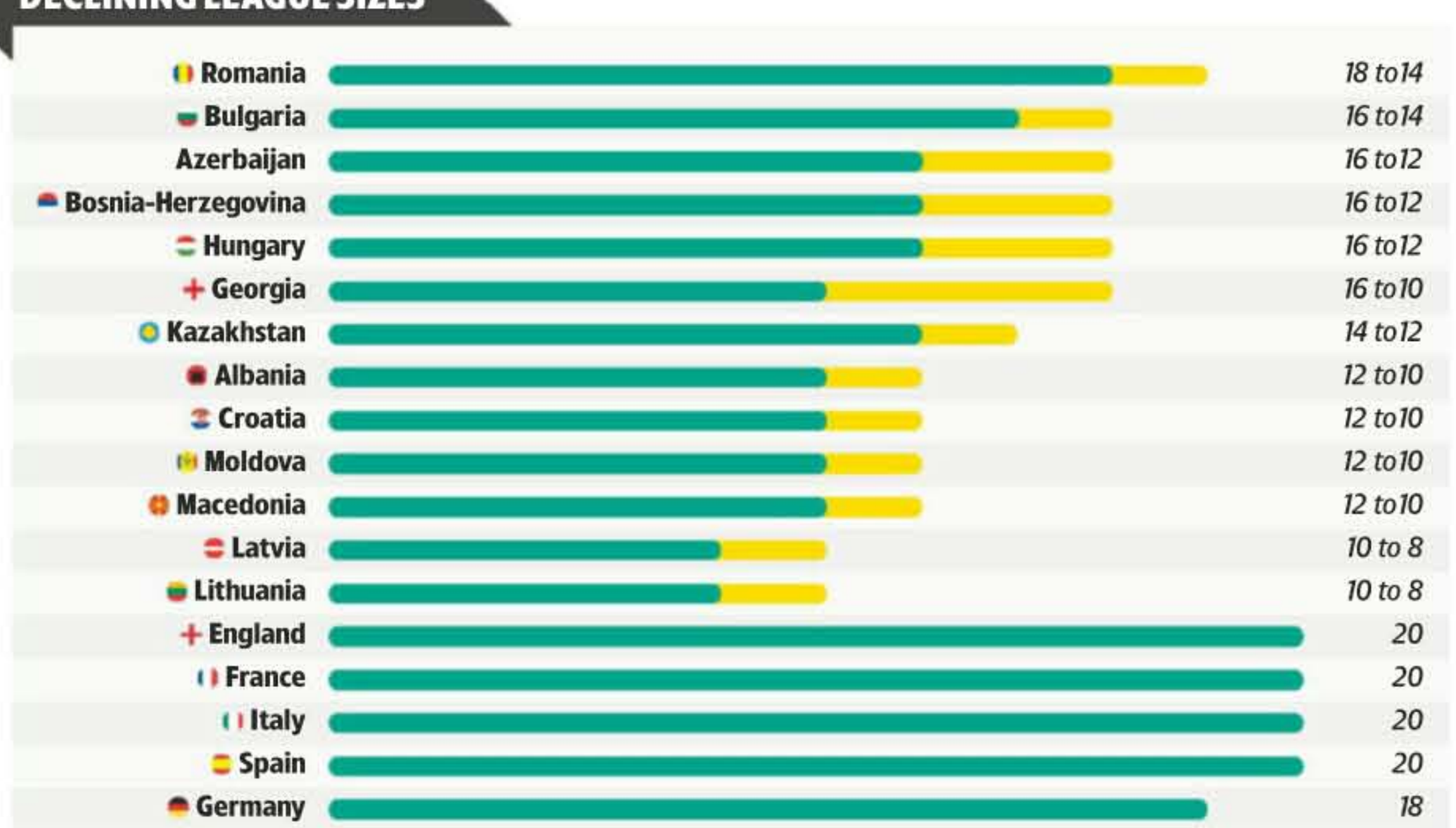
AZERBAIJAN
FK Baku

LITHUANIA
20 clubs, including Ekranas

LATVIA
3 clubs in 2015 alone
Skonto Riga

AV ATTENDANCES 2002 / 2016

DECLINING LEAGUE SIZES



FAMOUS NAMES FROM EUROPE'S PAST...

DUKLA PRAGUE (CZECHOSLOVAKIA)
1967 European Cup semi-finalists
1986 Cup-winners Cup semi-finalists
Disappeared in 1996 when merged with FK Pribram, from a town 60km south west of Prague, following relegation from Czech top flight in 1994.

STEAUA BUCHAREST (ROMANIA)
1986 European Cup winners
1988 European Cup semi-finalists
1989 European Cup runners-up
Currently exist in name only, following a dispute between the Romanian army and club owner Gigi Becali.

WIDZEW LODZ (POLAND)
1983 European Cup semi-finalists
Currently in the fourth tier of the Polish league after going bankrupt in 2015.

CSKA SOFIA (BULGARIA)
1967 European Cup semi-finalists
1982 European Cup semi-finalists
1989 Cup-winners Cup semi-finalists
Relegated to Bulgaria's third tier in 2015 because of debts. Merged with Litex Lovech in 2016 to regain top-flight licence.

GYORI ETO (HUNGARY)
1965 European Cup semi-finalists
Relegated to Hungary's third tier in 2015.

LOKOMOTIVE LEIPZIG (EAST GERMANY)
1975 UEFA Cup semi-finalists
1987 Cup-winners Cup runners-up
Went bankrupt in 2004, currently in the German fourth tier.

DYNAMO DRESDEN (EAST GERMANY)
1978 UEFA Cup semi-finalists
Currently in Bundesliga 2

UNIVERSITATEA CRAIOVA
1983 UEFA Cup semi-finalists
Dissolved in 2012, reformed in 2013 and now back in Romania's top flight.

DINAMO MOSCOW
1972 Cup-winners Cup runners-up
1978, 1985 Cup-winners Cup semi-finalists
Relegated to Russia's second tier in 2016.

BANIK OSTRAVA
1979 Cup-winners Cup semi-finalists
Relegated to Czech second tier in 2016.

Famous...Celtic (hoops) and Dukla Prague in the 1967 European Cup semi-final

6 of the best footballing sons

Nick Bidwell profiles some of those following in their father's footsteps

1 Marcos ALONSO

CHELSEA (ENG) & SPAIN

More than three decades after his father helped Barcelona win La Liga in 1985, the Madrid-born left-wingback looks set to repeat the championship feat in England with Chelsea.

Signed from Fiorentina last summer, the 26-year-old has been one of the unsung heroes of Antonio Conte's brave new world at Stamford Bridge, relentlessly shuttling back and forth, making chances, scoring goals and doing much of the donkey work for the likes of Eden Hazard or Pedro.

A graduate of the Real Madrid youth system, he cannot be far away from a first cap for Spain.

His grandfather, Marquitos, was one of Spain best-ever right-backs, winning five European Cups with Real Madrid in the 1950s.

2 Federico CHIESA

FIORENTINA & ITALY

The teenage winger has a lot of ground to cover if he is to emulate the achievements of his dad, Enrico, who played in World Cups and European Championships for Italy and scored 138 goals in a glittering club career, notably with Sampdoria, Parma and Fiorentina.

But at least the son and heir appears to be on the right lines, cutting quite a dash of late in both Serie A and the Europa League.

His 10-year association with Fiorentina has been a slow-burning affair. Often on the bench in his early days at the club, he joined the first-team squad in July and made his debut in a 2-1 loss to Juventus on the opening day of the season.

Technically good, skilful on the counter and with a strong shot from distance, he is a fluent English speaker and is currently studying physiology at university.

3 Valere GERMAIN

MONACO & FRANCE

Comfortable as a solo front runner, second striker or winger, the 26-year-old is very much in the mould of his dad Bruno Germain, who was a solid, unassuming defensive midfielder with Marseille and Paris Saint-Germain in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

Adhering to the same low-key principles, he is a totally reliable anti-star for whom the spotlight holds no appeal.

He has been through some tough times with Monaco, failing to make the 18-man squad for a Champions League win at Arsenal and being sent out on loan to Nice last season.

But after finding his scoring form he returned to the Stade Louis II in the summer and promptly regained a starting role.

4 Justin KLUIVERT

AJAX & HOLLAND

The 17-year-old son of iconic Ajax centre-forward Patrick Kluivert is a winger who recently made a remarkable first-team debut for Ajax.

In a thrilling 50-minute appearance from the bench against PEC Zwolle, he was a blur of tap-dancing feet and speed-induced vapour trails on the left flank. PEC right-back Dirk Marcellis was once good enough to play for PSV but he never came close to stopping the youngster.

With Ajax since the age of seven, Kluivert junior signed his first professional contract last spring.

5 Giovanni SIMEONE

GENOA (ITA) & ARGENTINA

The son of Atletico Madrid coach Diego Simeone is a chip off the old block. Whether forcefully calling the shots in the technical area or in his former role as a tough midfielder for Internazionale, Lazio and Argentina, Simeone senior remains true grit personified. And his son is a carbon-copy, leading the Genoa line with energy, grit and intensity.

In his first season in Serie A following a move from River Plate, the 21-year-old cemented a regular spot amid a flurry of goals, including a brace in a 3-1 victory over champions Juventus in November.

At River he had the ultimate apprenticeship, coming into contact with a host of positive influences – such as star strikers Radamel Falcao and David Trezeguet – and first-team coach Ramon Diaz, who was a one-time goal machine himself.

6 Enzo ZIDANE

REAL MADRID (SPA) & FRANCE

The eldest son of Real boss Zinedine Zidane, he made his senior debut for *Los Blancos* in November and scored in a 6-1 Spanish Cup victory over third-tier Cultural Leonesa.

The 21-year-old is an attacking midfielder who is clever in the timing of his forward runs and packs a fearsome shot. Although not the fastest, he thinks quickly and plays with a grace that is in keeping with the Bernabeu house style.

On Real's books since 2004, he has been playing for the club's B team, Castilla, for the last two years. Named after Uruguayan great Enzo Francescoli, in Spain he is known as Enzo Fernandez – his mother's maiden name.

TOMORROW'S STARS TODAY

Talentscout

TOP-FLIGHT DEBUTANTS

WORDS: Nick Bidwell

Franck KESSIE

Age 20 (19.12.96), Atalanta (Ita) & Ivory Coast

In a sentence

The box-to-box powerhouse is one of the hottest properties in European football and being chased by virtually every top Premier League outfit, a clutch of Serie A big-hitters, plus Paris Saint-Germain and Borussia Dortmund.

What they say

Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini: "As soon as I saw him in action in our pre-season training camp, I was struck by his great qualities. He has been exceptional for us this term."

Cesena director of sport Rino Foschi: "When he was with us, Juventus were always coming to watch. They used to often ask about his character. If I was asked for my opinion, I'd advise him to go to Juve."

Former Ivory Coast boss Michel Dussuyer: "Athletically and technically, he has much to offer. There's an awful lot of variety in his game."

> "He has been exceptional for us this term"
>
> **Atalanta coach Gian Piero Gasperini**

The story so far

Originally a ball-playing central defender, he emerged from the youth ranks of Ivorian side Stella Club d'Adjame and made his international debut for Ivory Coast at the age of 17. Spotted by Atalanta academy chief Maurizio Costanzi, he was signed in 2015, and after six months with the youth team he went on loan to Serie B side Cesena, where coach Massimo Drago transformed him into a barnstorming midfielder before returning to Atalanta last summer. Skippered the Ivorian under-17s to the African title in 2013.

The next step

He is bound to leave Bergamo at the end of this season as Atalanta have always been a selling club, nurturing young talent and then cashing in. With so many clubs showing interest, Atalanta director of sport Giovanni Sartori can afford to sit back, let the offers flood in and hit the jackpot. His current price is €25million and rising.

Strengths

Has imposing physicality, power in the air and exceptional drive and stamina. Comfortable on the ball, he is adept at turning defence into attack. A stealthy mover in and around the opposition box, he is able to shoot with either foot.

Weaknesses

Prone to wild, unnecessary challenges. His distribution can also be hit and miss at times.

3 THINGS YOU DIDN'T KNOW ABOUT KESSIE

- Known as the "Black Panther", he hails from Zebizekou, a village in the west of Ivory Coast.
- On making his full international debut in 2014, he became the first home-based player to play for the Elephants in a decade.
- He has already had a biography published in Ivory Coast. Called *Faith in Football*, it was written by his younger brother, Patrick.

Pol LIROLA

Age 19 (13.08.97), Sassuolo (Ita, loan from Juventus, Ita) & Spain
Six months into a two-season loan, the right-back has been performing so well of late that the Italian champions are rumoured to want him back. The Catalan was part of Espanyol's youth set-up and joined Juve in 2015.

Kai HAVERTZ

Age 17 (11.06.99), Bayer Leverkusen & Germany
Attacking midfielder who was his side's youngest-ever player at 17 years and four months. Still at school, he enjoyed a cameo in the Champions League win against Tottenham Hotspur at Wembley.

Sam LAMMERS

Age 19 (30.04.97), PSV & Holland
A source of goals in both the UEFA Youth League and for Holland under-19s, the 6ft 3in centre-forward has benefitted greatly from Ruud van Nistelrooy, who coaches the young strikers at PSV.

Moise KEAN

Age 16 (28.02.00), Juventus & Italy
Thanks to a couple of substitute appearances for Juve in November, the Italian-born striker of Ivorian lineage earned a place in the record books as the first millennial to play in Serie A and the Champions League.

Yann KARAMOH

Age 18 (08.07.98), Caen & France
Right-winger who has been one of the revelations of Ligue 1 this season, with his explosive speed, quick feet and ability to take on and beat defenders. Born in Ivory Coast, but mainly raised in the French capital, he started off at Racing Paris before switching to Caen at the age of 13.

Maxime LOPEZ

Age 19 (04.12.97), Marseille & France
Pocket-sized attacking midfielder who has established himself as a favourite of the supporters at the Stade Velodrome ever since he broke into the first team when Rudi Garcia took over as coach in October. And the under-20 international is just the sort of player OM fans love: skilful, relentlessly active, brave and a local lad to boot.

Gil DIAS

Age 20 (28.09.96), (Rio Ave, Por, loan from Monaco,Fra) & Portugal
The winger is making the most of his first taste of elite football in his native land. Excellent on the counter-attack and in one-on-one situations, he has an eye for goal too. Can also play as a box-to-box midfielder or a number 10. Left Braga for Monte Carlo in 2015.

Aaron MARTIN

Age 19 (22.04.97), Espanyol & Spain
Espanyol coach Quique Sanchez Flores is a former international full-back and the homegrown left-back has the potential to follow suit. Technically polished and adventurous, the Catalan was persistently targeted by Barcelona a few years ago, but refused to move. A European champion with Spain under-19s in 2015.

Emmanuel ADJEI

Age 19 (16.01.98), Anderlecht (Blg) & Ghana
Right-back or wing-back who is quick and has solid distribution skills. Impressive in last season's UEFA Youth League, he began in his homeland with FC Dreams and was courted by RB Leipzig prior to signing for Anderlecht last year.

JULIAN NAGELSMANN

"There are a number of clubs I wouldn't say no to"

The highly rated young coach of Bundesliga high-flyers Hoffenheim talks about his career so far – and drops hints about his future

As a rule, 29-year-olds don't complain that time flies. How do you feel after completing your first year as a coach in the Bundesliga?
It's gone really quickly, the shortest year I've ever known. In my daily work, exciting things happen constantly. Issues swiftly crop up and have to be dealt with. There's no chance of boredom.

Has this year changed you as a person ?
Whatever I do, I always try to detach myself as an individual from my role. And at the moment, that job is Bundesliga coach. Your profession will influence you a little, though not to a great extent.

Are you a different coach compared to how you were in your first year?
You are bound to develop. To have new ideas and methods, to refine certain things. However, the broad principles, substance and style of leadership remain the same.

What's the difference between coaching professionals and at youth level?
With the pros, it's easier to work on one weak point, then quickly move on to the next. You need more repetitions when dealing with youngsters. That said, I've also noticed that a lot of pros need the same sort of input. Some are more self-responsible than others.

What level are Hoffenheim currently at?
There have been games when we've performed well. Against Schalke [a 2-1 win] we were outstanding, perhaps even deserving an eight. That day, we worked to a high standard defensively and won lots of balls in the opposition half. But there also have been times, such as in the first-half of the 4-4 draw in Mainz when we were worthy only of a four.

What does your team lack?
We've been looking to improve defensively. In that area, we've never quite got it together. But that also could apply to the likes of Bayern Munich and Borussia Dortmund. Teams who like to have the ball and dominate don't necessarily have the type of players to fully concentrate on defence. We've tended to give the opposition too many easy goalscoring chances. Our movement after losing the ball has not been satisfactory. We're not always cohesive. At the back we're often outnumbered.

Which coach has come the closest to perfection on the field?
Pep Guardiola in his time at Barcelona. He was good with Bayern too, yet not quite at that extreme Barca level. Their most striking trait was not their strength in possession – that's always good at Barca – it was their behaviour when they didn't have the ball. Theirs was high-risk press, with man-on-man in defence.

You have been mentioned as a future coach of a big club. How does that feel?
I find it amusing. Everybody writes that I'm on the way out [of Hoffenheim]. Everybody wants me to go. Besides, there are so many coaches being linked to Bayern or other such clubs. I've no wish to share a coaching post with four others [laughs].

And seriously?
It's a relatively normal state of affairs. Football is like that. If you're successful, you're built up. The period when judgements are formed is a short one and of course, it can go either way. With me it's gone to the positive extreme. If we were to lose a few games, it would go in the other direction. and then I wouldn't be linked with Bayern. More likely would be SV Ohlstadt [an amateur side in Nagelsmann's home region of Bavaria].

How strong is your professional desire to lead a team to a title?
It's no secret that I'm very ambitious. I'd like to think that can be seen in training and on matchdays. I want to deliver as much as I can at Hoffenheim. Whether it's enough to win a title remains to be seen.

You had to abandon your own playing career at an early age because of injury. How much do you miss playing the game?
I miss it a lot and I think it shows. Every time I'm out on the pitch I always have a ball at my feet. I think my players appreciate that. They can see the pleasure I get out of the game. I can no longer play. But for me, the life of a coach is more interesting.

Can you reassure the Hoffenheim fans that you will still be around next season?
I'm convinced I will be.

Hoffenheim could qualify for next season's Champions League. Maybe you'd have no need to move on then...
That's possible too. When you take on a job, you're not sure how long it's going to last. You don't make plans. You simply have to meet expectations. And that's the case right now.

Have you discussed a contract extension?
I've still two-and-a-half years left on my present deal and, as far as I'm concerned, there's no point talking about it.

Are there specific clubs and championships in which you would like to coach?
I feel good in Germany. It's a pleasure coaching in the Bundesliga. My way of playing wouldn't suit every league. If I received an attractive offer, I'd be interested, but I haven't set my heart on any one club. All I will say is that there are a number of clubs in Europe I wouldn't say no to.

Can RB Leipzig threaten Bayern's dominance?
I think they can. There's a buzz in that city and they have the stadium, the infrastructure and the financial power. However, it's going to be a long process. Much will depend on their ability to bring in the sort of players who at the moment head for Bayern, Dortmund or England.

Interview by Michael Pfeifer/ESM

LTS
SPO

March 1966

Centre-forwards in the spotlight

Four months before the start of the World Cup, the front cover of the March 1966 edition of *World Soccer* featured a picture of England defender Jack Charlton challenging Gil Reece of Wales.

Inside, Brian Glanville enthused about the young talent that was emerging in a position that seemed to have changed somewhat in recent years: the traditional centre-forward.

"Europe now is full of gifted young centre-forwards," he remarked. "One of the most brilliant of them is, beyond question, Peter Osgood of Chelsea.

"A gorgeous mover and a fine ball player, Osgood is barely 19 years old, yet already he has justified most of the things his manager, Tommy Docherty, was saying about him a year ago.

"What one admires about him most of all is his absolute self-possession, whether he is giving an elegant reverse pass to an unmarked colleague, or swerving his way through alone against a packed defence. He is beyond doubt the most promising centre-forward England have thrown up since the war, and those who say he is 'really' an inside-forward simply don't know what centre-forward play is all about."

Osgood wasn't the only player in Europe to have caught Glanville's eye. In Italy, 20-year-old Sergio "Bobo" Gori was making an impact at Internazionale.

But as Glanville points out: "The revelation of the season is neither of these. It must be 'Georgi' Asparoukhov, of Levski and Bulgaria. Twenty two years old, it was the powerful Asparouhkov's two goals in a minute that knocked Belgium out of the World Cup. But, still more than that, it was his constant aggression and command over the Belgian centre-half, Verbiest, which unsettled the Belgian defence. There is no doubt that he is going to cause Brazil's World Cup group a great deal of trouble in July.

"The Portuguese know all about him. He was a terrible problem to Benfica in this season's European Cup. Bela Guttmann, the manager, praised him generously and Starostin, the Russian, thinks him the best in Europe.

"Then there's Ferenc Bene, who, poor fellow, simply cannot gain his birthright in the Hungarian team. The distinguished presence of Florian Albert has served to banish him to the wing, where he isn't half the player. But he is, beyond question, a centre-forward of the highest gifts, capable of assertion in any company and against any opposition.

"Those I have mentioned are the finest, most gifted centre-forwards of the new generation. Then there are one or two of the ultra old-fashioned type, Wyn Davies of Wales, Jose Torres of Portugal, players whose danger resides in their heading ability. Russia have found a new leader in Banichevski, the Poles in Sadek.

"It is a healthy and encouraging sign for world football. Clearly the prevalence of massed defences can't kill the ambition of the gifted footballer to lead an attack and score goals." WS

Gifted...Chelsea's teenage centre-forward Peter Osgood

WORLD SOCCER

Bukka

FOURTEEN — WORLD SOCCER, March, 1966

BRIAN GLANVILLE rejoices at the old favourite's return

The Centre Forward is Back Again

FOOTBALL is full of surprises, not least in its bewildering shortages. In the early 1950s, for example, there was a remarkable lack of outside-lefts. Today, there is an astonishing poverty of centre-half-backs. But by way of compensation, in at least one position, and that the most glamorous of all, the famine seems to be ending. There is a sudden, pleasing efflorescence of centre-forwards.

Now, the centre-forward has remained throughout the history of the game the goal-scorer par excellence. You can police him with the third back, you can oppose him with the double centre-half of 4-2-4, you can attempt to frustrate him with the sweeper-up (Nestor Combin, the Franco-Argentine now playing for Varese, recently lamented that even when you have beaten the centre-half, there is still the *libero* to come.) But the centre-forward continues to score.

More, despite the fashion of the double spearhead, the centre-forward has retained a distinct *identity*. Pele and Jimmy Greaves, for *example*, are striking inside-forwards; there is no question of thinking of either of them as centre-forwards. On the other hand, Uwe Seeler, Vavá, Luis Artime and Joe Baker are centre-forwards. Their quality may differ, but each of them is essentially a leader, a man who bears the brunt of the attack and *makes* progress through the middle, often taking the weight and the attention away from the striking inside-man.

From behind

There has, of course, been a tendency since the days of Nandor Hidegkuti for centre-forwards to lead their forces *from* behind, like the Duke of Plaza Toro. Raymond Kopa did it for France, notably in the World Cup of 1958; Don Revie did it for Manchester City; Tom Finney for Preston North End; Alfredo Di Stefano, to a certain degree, for Real Madrid (though, of course, he would *burst* through to score goals, too).

But this style of *centre-forward* has rather gone out of fashion with the dissemination of 4-2-4—and 4-3-3. Today, you are either a striker or a midfield man. Thus, the classical, traditional centre-forward, *far from* having had his day, as once seemed likely, has instead contrived to resurrect himself.

Europe, *now*, is full of gifted young centre-forwards. One of the most brilliant of them is beyond question Peter Osgood, of Chelsea. Tall, slender, a gorgeous mover and a fine ball player, Osgood is barely 19 years old, yet already he has justified most of the things his manager, Tommy Docherty, was saying about him a year ago. At that time, Osgood was leader of the England Youth team attack. His first game for Chelsea was at home to Workington, in a League Cup tie, and things didn't go too well.

Nor was he impressive when thrown in at the deep end against Roma, in an Inter Cities Fairs Cup match at Stamford Bridge, before he had played a single Championship game.

Since then, however, Osgood has made amazing progress. What one admires about him most of all is his absolute self-possession, whether he is giving an elegant reverse pass to an unmarked colleague, or swerving his way through alone, against a packed defence. He has still to show us the ability in the air which Docherty has *praised*, and which one is entitled to expect from so tall a man. (He himself says that George Graham, his inside-right, is so good in the air that he prefers to leave it to him.) But he is beyond doubt the most promising centre-forward England have thrown up since the war, and those who say he is "really" an inside-forward simply don't know what centre-forward play is all about.

Mazzola

The remark might be more apposite were it applied to Sandrino Mazzola, the present Italy centre-forward, but a striking inside-forward for his club, Internazionale. Mazzola has always been an inside-forward by profession, but his club and country's needs have forced him often into leading the attack. There, through no fault of his own, his abundant talents have not received full expression. There could be no better illustration of the radical difference between the natural centre-forward, and the striking inside-forward. Tall and very slight, Mazzola obviously doesn't relish the bumps, the buffetings and the combativity of the centre-forward position, whereas Osgood, though not much thicker at the moment, doesn't seem to mind them. Thus, Italy's international team has suffered from a lack of weight and authority in the penalty-area. Mazzola is infinitely worth his place; but that place isn't centre-forward.

It may, therefore, be significant that his own club have just unearthed a centre-forward of outstanding talent. Twenty years old this February, Sergio "Bobo"

One of the brightest stars on the English centre-forward scene at present is the Chelsea leader Peter Osgood. (Pres.)

> **"Those who say [Peter Osgood] is 'really' an inside-forward simply don't know what centre-forward play is all about"**

Georgi Asparoukhov tries a spectacular overhead kick at goal during a Bulgarian League match. (Planet.)

Gori is another of Inter's splendid young discoveries, a Milan boy who in a recent League match ran rings round another, distinguished Milanese, Salvadore of Juventus. It is not too late for Gori to thrust his way into a World Cup team which may well have need of him.

But the revelation of the season is none of these. It must be Gueorgui "Georgi" Asparoukhov, of Levski and Bulgaria. Twenty-two years old, it was the powerful Asparoukhov's two goals in a minute which knocked Belgium out of the World Cup in Florence. But, still more than that, it was his constant aggression, and command over the Belgian centre-half, Verbiest, which unsettled the Belgian defence. There is no doubt that he is going to cause Brazil's World Cup group a great deal of trouble next July.

The Portuguese, who figure in the group, know all about him already. He was a terrible problem to Benfica—to provide most of the national side—in this season's European Cup ties. Bela Guttmann, the team manager, praised him generously, and Starostin, the Russian, thinks him the best in Europe.

Birthright

Then there's Ferenc Bene who, poor fellow, simply cannot gain his birthright in the Hungarian team. The distinguished presence of Florian Albert has served to banish him to the wing, where he isn't half the player. But he is, beyond question, a centre-forward of the highest gifts, capable of assertion in any company and against any opposition. If it is true that his selector feels he isn't big enough for an international centre-forward, I can only marvel. Was Hughie Gallacher big enough? Bene has the courage, acceleration and above all the enterprise which have always distinguished the true centre-forward. It seems to me unthinkable that he should be barred from the position on dubious arguments of physique.

Those I have mentioned are the finest, most gifted centre-forwards of the new generation, though Flavio of Brazil can presumably show us much more than he did when playing for the Corinthians at Highbury. Then there are one or two of the ultra old-fashioned type, Wyn Davies of Bolton and Wales, José Torres of Benfica and Portugal, players whose danger and potential resides in their heads; or rather, heading ability. Russia have found a new leader in Banichevski, the man who headed that remarkable goal straight from a goal kick in Rio, the Poles have an excellent centre-forward in Sadek, as England learned at Goodison.

Can't kill

It is a healthy and encouraging sign for world football. Clearly the prevalence of massed defences can't kill the ambition of the gifted footballer to lead an attack and score goals.

BACK NUMBERS

Please cut here

To Circulation Manager, WORLD SOCCER, Sutherland House, 5-6 Argyll Street, London, W.1 Please supply following back numbers: JAN., FEB., JUNE, JULY, OCT., NOV., DEC., 1963, FEB., MARCH, JULY, NOV., 1964, FEB., APRIL, MAY, JUNE, JULY, AUG., SEPT., OCT., NOV., DEC., 1965; JAN., FEB., 1966. I enclose 2/10 for each copy.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Amount enclosed .....

Priority Order Forms for World Soccer

MAKE SURE OF WORLD SOCCER EACH MONTH—ORDER FROM YOUR NEWSAGENT OR TAKE OUT A SUBSCRIPTION. ORDER FORMS FOR EITHER METHOD ARE PROVIDED BELOW.

To the Subscription Manager, WORLD SOCCER, Sutherland House, 5-6 Argyll Street, London, W.1. please enter a one year subscription for me commencing with issue dated ..... enclosed herewith is £1.150 (6 dollars) as payment.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Please cut here

To the Newsagent: PLEASE SUPPLY ME EACH MONTH WITH WORLD SOCCER, PRICE 2/6d.

NAME .....

ADDRESS .....

Also in this issue...

p10
"One from bottom in the table, and with gates plunging down to an average of 5,000, the position is serious," wrote Stuart Shaw of the plight of Magdeburg, who were set to meet West Ham United in the European Cup-winners Cup. However, this was a competition in which the East German side had not lost a game for two years – they went out against Galatasaray the previous season on the toss of a coin, "so strictly speaking their football record was unimpaired".

p27
Andrew Dettre produced a player portrait of a player by the name of Vladimir Brednev who he had seen in action for Torpedo Moscow, in Australia, in 1965, but who had not been seen or heard of since. He posed the question: "Who was he? Where is he now? And if there is a Soviet player called Brednev in Torpedo or any other club, what has he done that they bypass him?"

p36
In his round-up of African football, Norman D Reich focused on the East African Championship won by Tanganyika – now known as Tanzania – who finished ahead of Kenya, Uganda and Zanzibar. There was also a photo of Zambian president Kenneth Kaunda, who refereed a match between his own cabinet and a team of mayors and town councillors in Kitwe, Zambia's second city.

p41
When a so-called friendly between hosts Emelec of Ecuador and Argentina's Velez Sarsfield ended in a brawl, Roger MacDonald reported how "scores of police poured on to the field at full time" and then "marched 11 bewildered Argentinians away – still in their football strip" to prison. He went on to explain how "it took a frantic protest by Velez officials to get them out of jail in time to catch their plane home".

10 years ago
In the Champions League round of 16, Valencia draw 0-0 with Internazionale in the second leg, but the game is marred by a mass brawl in which Inter players chase the hosts' David Navarro across the pitch at the Mestalla.

20 years ago
Romario scores twice for Flamengo in a 7-0 thrashing of Madureira to take his tally for the club to 100 goals in 166 games. He is also at the centre of a free-for-all on the pitch, which he sparks by trading kicks with the opposition's Cafezinho.

30 years ago
Two goals in the last five minutes, from John Clark and Iain Ferguson, give Dundee United a 2-1 victory over a Barcelona team coached by Terry Venables at Camp Nou to complete a 3-1 aggregate victory in their UEFA Cup quarter-final.

40 years ago
Peru beat Chile 2-0 to take their place alongside Brazil and hosts Argentina as South America's representatives in the 1978 World Cup finals. Needing just a draw to qualify, goals from Hugo Sotil and Juan Carlos Oblitas (below) settled matters.

50 years ago
Internazionale, who won in 1964 and 1965, beat holders Real Madrid in the European Cup quarter-finals. The Italians won 2-0 in Madrid in the return to complete a 3-0 aggregate victory, with Renato Cappellini scoring in both legs.

MISCELLANEOUS

AHR

+44(0)7918 528880

Advanced Hair Regrowth in London - Natural Hair Regrowth Expert

No surgery
No Medication
No Risk
No Complication

Advanced Hair Regrowth Clinic (London)

2 Latitude House Oval Road NW1 7EU

Call now to book your appointment at +44 7918528880

or

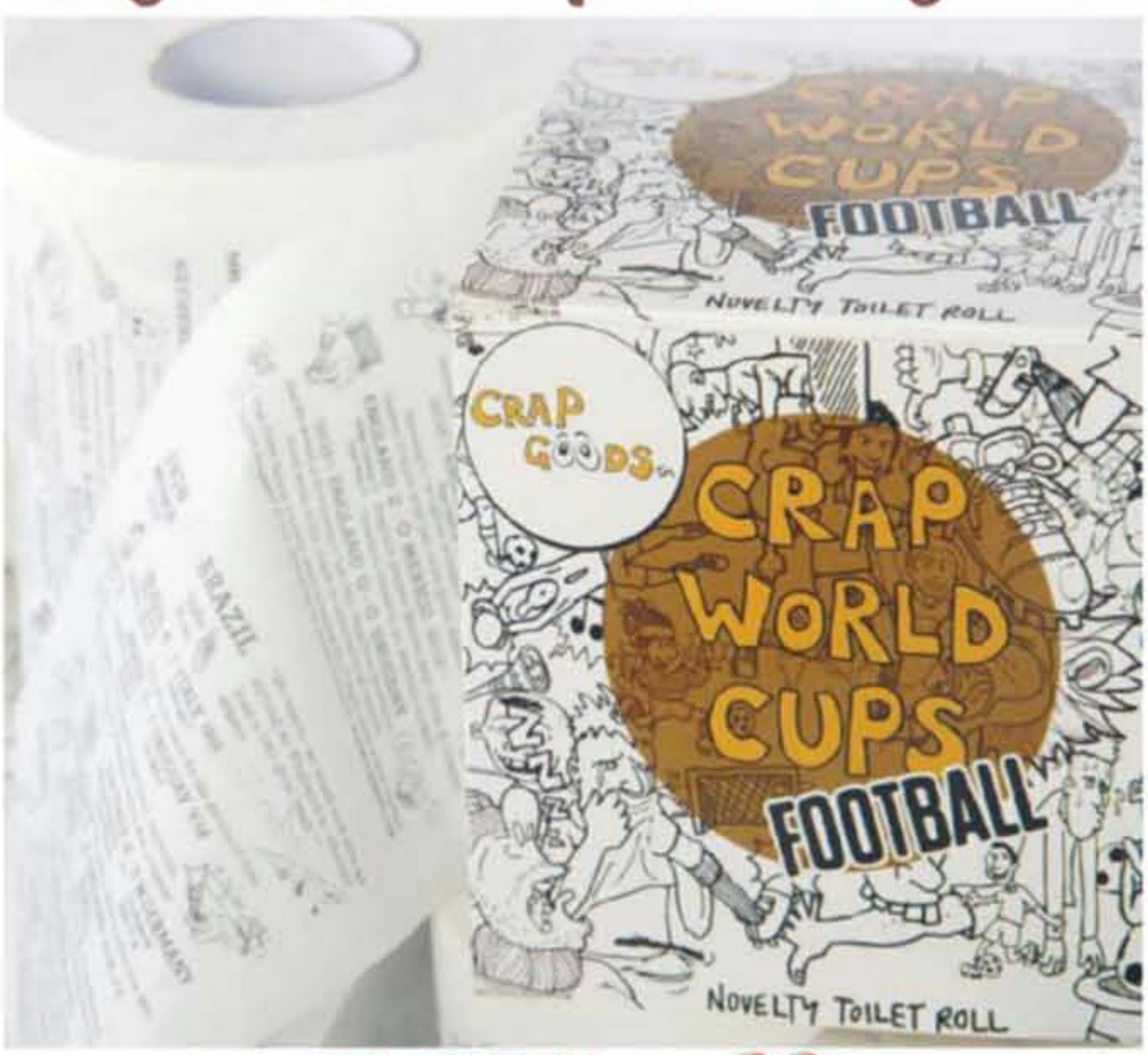
Email to ngmilly@gmail.com

www.advancedhairregrowth.com

① Stop Hair Loss
② Revitalize Hair Follicle to start to grow hair
③ Strengthen & Volumize existing Hair

MISCELLANEOUS

England's story. On a bog roll.



20% off

Use discount code WORLDSOCCER

crapgoods.com

MISCELLANEOUS

ADDING PRESTIGE TO YOUR IMAGE

Customised Ties, Embroidered Badges, Wooden Plaques, Scarves, Umbrellas, Metal Enamelware, Golf club badges & Blazers, Promotional Products

For more information call 01274 880072
email filaspun@btinternet.com
or visit www.filaspun.co.uk

PROGRAMMES

FREE

FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES

To receive a FREE programme plus a copy of our latest catalogue (listing several thousand different mint condition Big Match, League, Scottish, Irish, Foreign and Non-League teams programmes etc.) please send your name and address to:

STEVE EARL FOOTBALL PROGRAMMES (DEPT.WS)
BROAD STREET, BUNGAY, SUFFOLK, NR351AH, ENGLAND
or phone 01986 892621 or visit www.footballprogs.co.uk
ENGLAND v 2016 Holland, Malta(WC), Portugal, Scotland(WC) & Spain £8 each (inc.p&p)
(Credit/Debit Cards & PayPal accepted)

World Service

NOW INCORPORATING Global diary

Exclusive reports from our worldwide network of correspondents

BRYAN KAY — Honduras — 77

PAUL GARDNER — USA — 68

SEAN CREEDON — Rep of Ireland — 82

MIKE PLASTOW — Japan — 80

TIM VICKERY — Libertadores — 72

STEVE MENARY — Burundi — 78

MARK GLEESON — African Nations Cup — 64

PLUS

In control...DR Congo's Dieumerci Mbokani 88

DIARY

76 Comprehensive global news

RESULTS, TABLES, FIXTURES

84 International
87 Club

SQUADS

88 African Nations Cup

Cup shock... Liverpool (in red) lost to Wolves 79

African Nations Cup

MARK GLEESON

Cameroon claim main prize

'Indomitable Lions' see off all the challengers in Gabon

GROUP A

Nervous starts from African Nations Cup finals hosts are nothing new and Gabon, by their own admission, were awful in the first half against minnows Guinea-Bissau. It took Pierre-Emerick Aubameyang sliding in at the back post to set them on their way to a presumed victory in the opening match in Libreville. But they did not reckon on the newcomers' plucky determination and Juary rose to head home an equaliser in stoppage time that provided the tournament with a dramatic start.

Guinea-Bissau were leading Cameroon at half-time of their next game and threatening more shocks before Sebastien Siani and Michael Ngadeu turned matters around and secured a 2-1 win.

Gabon limped along with a 1-1 draw against Burkina Faso, which meant they needed to beat Cameroon in the last round of group games.

Aubameyang missed a sitter in the opening minutes before Gabon went back to tepid form, only to wake up in the closing stages and almost sneak the victory, with Denis Bouanga denied by the upright and a follow-up from Didier Ndong freakishly saved by Fabrice Ondoa. A 0-0 draw meant Gabon were out while Cameroon finished runners-up to Burkina Faso.

GROUP B

Senegal looked imperious as they strode to top spot in the group in Franceville, taking just two games to make sure of finishing first. But their 2-0 win over Tunisia in their opening game was overshadowed by Zimbabwe's return to the finals after a decade as they outplayed Algeria, and it was only through naivety that they allowed Riyad Mahrez to score a late equaliser.

The exciting, attacking approach of Zimbabwe marked them out from early on as a team to watch, but allowing a 2-1 advantage to slip late in the game against Algeria also said much about their inexperience at the top level.

Algeria had been one of the pre-tournament favourites but never offered any evidence to back up that status once they got to Gabon. Their 2-0 loss to neighbours Tunisia in their next game effectively eliminated them and promoted furious speculation over the future of coach Georges Leekens. He would later cite that reaction as his reason for resigning once they were out of the competition.

Zimbabwe's clash with Senegal was expected to be a rollicking affair, but it turned out to be a very one-sided affair as an opening 15-minute blitz saw Senegal all but settle the outcome.

For the last set of fixtures, Tunisia needed only a draw to go through as runners-up, while Zimbabwe had to beat them. In that case, Algeria then also had a slim chance but only with a handsome win over the Senegalese. However, it was all rendered academic as Tunisia scored early against Zimbabwe and went on to record a 4-2 win while Senegal rested 10 players in a 2-2 draw with Algeria.

Struggle...Algeria's Yacine Brahimi (right) takes on Mohamed Amine Ben Amor of Tunisia

GROUP C

The brand new stadium in Oyem lay in the heart of the jungle, miles from anywhere, and was designed to bridge two towns. Yet it is unlikely to serve either in the future because it is just too far to get to.

Holders Ivory Coast were under immediate pressure as Togo, with Emmanuel Adebayor leading their attack despite not playing any club football for some six months, held them to a goalless draw. That allowed Democratic Republic of Congo, despite being down to 10 men as Joyce Lomalisa became the only player sent off in the tournament, to take the early lead in the standings as they snatched a fortunate 1-0 win over Morocco.

> Gabon, by their own admission, were awful in the first half against Guinea-Bissau

The Congolese then put the Ivorians in deeper peril with a 2-2 draw in which the defending champions twice had to come from behind to equalise.

"No matter," said Ivorian full-back Serge Aurier, "when we won the trophy in 2015 we also drew our first two games and went on to win the rest. We'll just have to do it again."

Morocco came from conceding an early goal to give a glimpse of their potential in a 3-1 win over Togo where coach Herve Renard was pitted against his mentor Claude Le Roy. But Morocco would have to hold off the Ivorians in their last game if they were to advance while DR Congo seemed sure to win the group with the easier finish against Togo.

That proved the case as the Congolese won 3-1 while Rachid Alioui came on as a second half substitute to score a spectacular winner from 35 metres to secure

Impressive...DR Congo celebrate their third goal against Togo

Review

Clash...Burkina Faso midfielder Alain Traore gets the better of Gabon defender Benjamin Ze Ondo

progress for Morocco and eliminate the champions, whose coach Michel Dussuyer quit just days later.

GROUP D

Egypt, chasing a record-extending eighth Nations Cup title, looked nervous and reticent as they marked their return after missing three successive finals and drew 0-0 with Mali on a dreadful pitch in Port Gentil. Ghana were gifted a penalty by Uganda, returning after a 39-year absence, in a moment of defensive suicide which proved enough to get the Black Stars off to a winning start, although they lost Baba Rahman to a bad knee injury.

Ghana made it two in a row in their next game as Asamoah Gyan's goal saw off Mali and secured progress past the first round for the sixth successive tournament.

Plucky Uganda might have been short on real talent and experience but had cleverly compensated by being supremely fit and were headed for their first point, against Egypt, until another moment of horror in defence allowed Abdallah El Said to score a last-minute winner and make Uganda the first team to be eliminated.

Committed...Ghana's Andre Ayew battles with Uganda's defence

Egypt then snatched top place in the group away from Ghana by beating them 1-0 in their final game through a stunning free-kick from Mohamed Salah although any hopes of a decent contest were nullified by the atrocious surface.

QUARTER-FINALS

Burkina Faso made a surprise run to the 2013 Final in South Africa and with many key players still remaining from that squad they believed they could go one better in Gabon, especially after seeing off Tunisia in the first of the knockout round matches. Two late goals in the space of four minutes in Libreville broke the deadlock as Aristide Bance hammered home a free-kick in the 80th minute and a breakaway goal from Prejuce Nakoulma six minutes from time made sure.

Senegal and Cameroon then met in Franceville with Senegal sharp in the build-up but blunt in the attack. They had ample opportunity to win the game although

Cameroon were also guilty of missing gilt-edged chances which might have settled the issue before penalties were needed as a tie-breaker.

A distraught Sadio Mane, who had been outstanding through 120 minutes of action, had to be carried from the pitch by his team-mates after squandering the decisive kick as Cameroon edged Senegal 5-4 in the shoot-out. Mane's penalty was stopped one-handed by Fabrice Ondoa, the 21-year-old keeper who burst into a similar flood of tears at the end of the game.

The Ayew brothers ensured Ghana's 2-1 win over DR Congo in Oyem in the third quarter-final with Jordan Ayew producing a fine opener at the end of some individual skill, only for Paul-Jose Mpoku to equalise with a long-range effort for one of the best goals of the tournament. But parity was broken in the final 15 minutes with a clumsy foul that allowed Andre Ayew to tuck away his second penalty of the tournament for the winner.

> A distraught Sadio Mane had to be carried from the pitch by his team-mates

In Port Gentil, Morocco played a physically taxing pressing game and a wall of five defenders as they tried to get the better of Egypt. And on the balance of the 90 minutes they were the better team, only being let down by the absence of a recognised striker and some slack marking by captain Medhi Benatia.

The Juventus centre-back allowed an Egyptian corner to bobble around in the penalty area and then failed to prevent Mahmoud Kahraba from pinching a goal three minutes from time to see the Pharaohs through to a spot in the semi-finals.

Equaliser...Nicolas N'koulou (second left) scores in the Final for Cameroon

Foul...Cameroon stop Senegal striker Keita

SEMI-FINALS

In the last four, Burkina Faso lined up against Egypt having had more than a day longer to rest after their quarter-final success. And this was almost immediately evident as Burkina showed all the attacking acumen and Egypt sucked up the pressure and occasionally threatened on the counter.

"They were much fitter than us. They were better with aggressive attacking. They wasted so many chances," said Egypt coach Hector Cuper after they edged the Burkinabe 4-3 on penalties following a 1-1 draw. "In the end we had to try and get to penalties and take our luck from there."

Mohamed Salah had handed Egypt a 66th-minute lead with a superb curling finish at the end of a rare attack but Burkina were level just seven minutes later through Aristide Bance, the gangly forward who was the first to breach the Egyptian defences in the finals. That meant extra time and the second shoot-out of the tournament, in which 44-year-old Essam El Hadary wrote all the headlines with two match-winning saves.

A day later Cameroon beat Ghana 2-0 in Franceville in a lively contest where both goals came in the second half. Defender Michael Ngadeu snuck around the back of the Ghana defence from a free-kick and took advantage of a mix-up to blast the ball home in the 72nd minute. Ghana centre-back John Boye got into a muddle with keeper Brimah Razak that allowed the ball to run through to the unmarked Cameroonian.

It set up a furious effort by Ghana, whose last success at the tournament was in 1982 but who promised much

Joy...Egypt win on penalties in the semi-finals

over recent editions only to fall short at crucial junctures. At the end, Christian Bassogog caught Ghana on the counter as Cameroon added a second with virtually the last kick of the game.

FINAL

Mohamed Elneny was drafted back into the Egypt team after missing three games through injury and made an immediate impact with a clever 22nd-minute goal to put his side ahead at half-time. Despite being one of his country's high-profile exports, the Arsenal midfielder received copious amounts of derision on social media from fans for his performances in the first round but he shut up his critics with a clever goal that caught out Cameroon goalkeeper Fabrice Ondoa at the near post.

Two substitutions by Cameroon coach Hugo Broos turned the game on its head.

First-half injury replacement Nicolas N'koulou made the first impact, rising with conviction to head home an equaliser in the 59th minute. Once that goal arrived, Cameroon took firm control of the game with Egypt again tiring visibly

Half-time sub Vincent Aboubakar settled matters two minutes from time, shrugging off the attention of three defenders and slamming the ball into the net for a dramatic winner. WS

Champions...Cameroon are crowned kings of Africa

AFRICAN BOSS FACING ELECTION CHALLENGE

The Confederation of African Football's long-standing president Issa Hayatou is expected to be handed his eighth term in office and extend his tenure into a fourth decade at the organisation's congress in Addis Ababa on March 16.

Only twice before has the 70-year-old Cameroonian faced a challenge to his presidency and on both occasions his rivals were seen off with consummate ease in one-sided results.

He has a new opponent this time, and while Ahmad from Madagascar – who uses just one name – is expected to provide a stiffer challenge, he is not given any realistic chance of winning, despite the high number of new African football associations leaders who have emerged in recent years with little loyalty to the status quo.

Ahmad does have the tacit backing of FIFA boss Gianni Infantino, who had been looking for a candidate to back in a bid to remove Hayatou.

Ahmad, 54, is a former government minister in his country and now serves as the deputy speaker of parliament. However, he was an unknown figure in football until he produced a shock win four years ago to beat South Africa's World Cup 2010 boss Danny Jordaan to a seat on the CAF executive committee.

Only CAF executive committee members may stand for the organisation's presidency – a ruling recently brought in to stymie the advances of Jacques Anouma, who was the last potential threat to Hayatou's tenure. And that has resulted in an iron grip that Infantino hopes to dislodge.

Revenge...Infantino (left) and Hayatou

Infantino has been trying to whip up change in Africa and he held a conclave with 20 African football association presidents in Nigeria last year – without inviting Hayatou – and was due to do the same in Johannesburg with another 20 ahead of the election.

Hayatou and CAF backed Infantino's opponent Sheikh Salman of Bahrain in the last FIFA election and revenge is in the air. None of Hayatou's loyalists were retained in the massive overhaul of FIFA committees that world football's governing body announced in January.

Unfortunately for Infantino, Ahmad has little of the charisma that has helped Hayatou stay firmly in control of African football since he was first elected in 1988.

Mark Gleeson

MLS

PAUL GARDNER

MLS eyes south of the border

Europe's ageing stars are no longer America's most wanted

The fact that there are no big-name signings ahead of the new season does not reveal any MLS weakness. In fact, it demonstrates quite the opposite really, as it suggests the league's clubs are becoming a lot cannier in their player recruitment.

Steven Gerrard and Frank Lampard have both gone back to England after short stints in MLS, where neither exactly sparkled last year and their respective sides, Los Angeles Galaxy and New York City, won nothing.

So maybe a lesson has been learned. Ageing stars – particularly ageing Brits, it seems – are not what MLS needs.

And the comparative failure of Lampard and Gerrard stands in stark contrast to the exploits of the less blazoned Nicolas Lodeiro at Seattle Sounders, for example.

For Sounders, 2016 had looked like being yet another barren campaign. For a club with by far the biggest support – last year's average attendance was an extraordinary 42,636 – the repeated failure to win the title during an eight-year MLS life was not acceptable. Long-time coach Sigi Schmid departed in mid-season, replaced by his assistant Brian Schmetzer.

Just three days after Schmid bowed out, Lodeiro joined Seattle – Schmid had evidently been involved in his signing – and it was the Uruguayan's commanding midfield play and goalscoring that immediately transformed Sounders into a championship contender. Just four months later they won their first MLS Cup.

The message was clear: forget the big European names, there are better, cheaper players to be found in South America. But this news is hardly new. It could be seen back in 2007 when Real Salt Lake signed the virtually unknown 27-year-old Argentinian playmaker Javier Morales and went on to win the 2009 MLS title.

When American coach Caleb Porter took charge of Portland Timbers in 2012, his key signing proved to be Argentinian midfielder Diego Valeri, who scored the fastest-ever goal, after just 27 seconds, in an MLS Cup Final and led Timbers to victory. After a disappointing 2016 season, Porter has once again turned south, bringing in midfielder Sebastian Blanco from Argentinian club San Lorenzo.

Last term, MLS Cup favourites Dallas fell short only after their Argentinian midfielder Mauro Diaz snapped an Achilles tendon shortly before the play-offs began.

And the appointment of two Latino coaches – Colombia's Wilmar Cabrera at Houston and ex-Argentina boss Gerardo Martino at new club Atlanta United – is likely to see more and more South Americans playing in MLS.

Scuppered...Oscar Romero of Racing

During the close season, MLS' 20 clubs signed 71 players from overseas between them, including 38 from Europe and 30 from South America. English and Welsh clubs supplied 10 players, while Mexican sides were next with seven players, followed by Argentina and Costa Rica with six each.

But just as MLS seems to have realised that there is a wealth of unexplored talent south of the border, a formidable rival for signing that talent has entered the picture in the shape of China.

One of the first signings announced by Atlanta was that of dynamic Paraguayan forward Oscar Romero from Argentinian club Racing. However, just as it seemed that the exciting 24-year-old was on his way to the US, in stepped Chinese side Shanghai Shenhua to scupper the deal with a better offer.

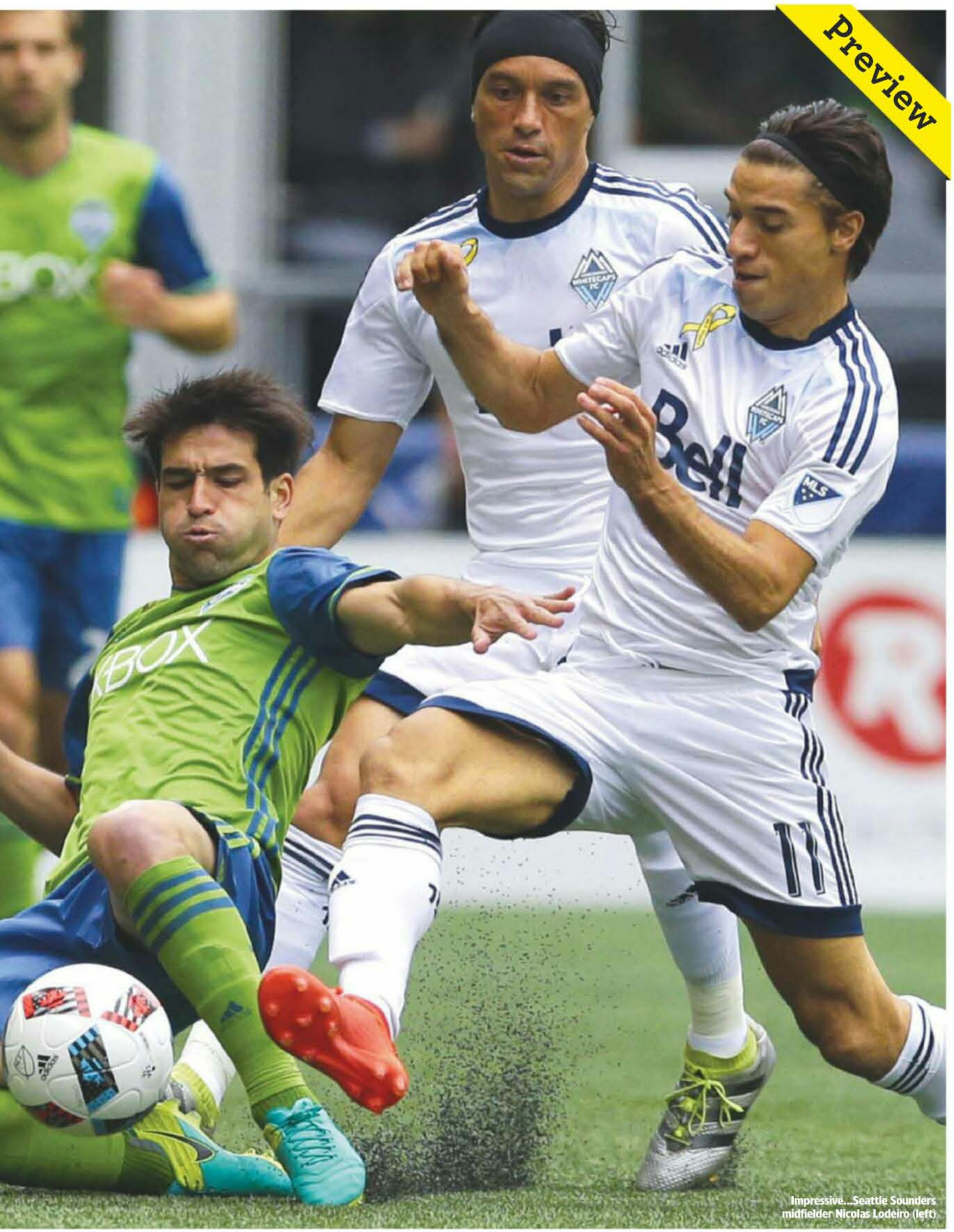
> The game's minor league situation in the US threatened to descend into total chaos

MLS commissioner Don Garber, who once airily dismissed Chinese soccer ambitions on the grounds that their level of spending was unsustainable, may now have cause to worry.

While MLS continued to solidify its position as a league to be taken seriously in the American professional sports scene, the game's minor league situation in the USA, which has always been a rather unsettled area, threatened to descend into total chaos.

Under carefully dictated criteria set out by the United States Soccer Federation, MLS had been declared a Division 1 soccer League, while the North American Soccer League (which included the supposedly re-born New York Cosmos) was officially recognised as the sport's Division 2 league. Another league, the United Soccer ➤

Gone...Gerrard and Lampard



Impressive...Seattle Sounders midfielder Nicolas Lodeiro (left)

Safe...New York Cosmos (in white)

League, was granted Division 3 status.

However, the arrangement was never a happy one. The USL felt that it should be the division 2 league, while the NASL had its own Division 1 ambitions. In 2015, the NASL accused the USSF of colluding with MLS to protect the latter's monopoly as the only Division 1 league in the United States. It even threatened a lawsuit.

The wheels started to come off in the late summer of 2016 when it became known that two NASL clubs intended to defect and join the USL. And things got worse for the NASL when rumours spread that its flagship franchise, New York Cosmos, were laying off staff and had stopped playing their players.

One of the NASL's top clubs, Minnesota, were already leaving to join MLS as an expansion team. The loss of three other clubs would put NASL with fewer than the 12 clubs deemed necessary by the USSF for a Division 2 league. Under the circumstances, it was hardly surprising

> NASL, though short of its required 12 clubs, will be allowed to play this year as a Division 2 league – but that status will be shared

that USL should again start pressing its own claim to be the Division 2 league.

Things were temporarily calmed at an emergency meeting when it was revealed that a new owner had been found for Cosmos and that the club was busy re-signing its former players. The NASL, though short of its required 12 clubs, will be allowed to play this year as a Division 2 league – but that status will be shared with USL, for 2017 at least.

The unpalatable fact about minor-league soccer in the States is that it has never been a healthy activity. Both the original NASL and the current MLS have been imposed from the top. There has never been a moment when it looked likely that a minor league would spawn a top pro-league.

The current chaos merely shows that nothing has changed and more confusion no doubt is pending. Those who continue to insist that football in the States needs a promotion and relegation system are simply not paying attention to the reality and chronic instability of minor league soccer. WS

CLUB BY CLUB: NEW ARRIVALS

ATLANTA UNITED

Coach: Gerardo Martino
Main arrivals: Greg Garza (D, Tijuana, Mex), Leandro Gonzalez Pirez (D, Estudiantes, Arg), Michael Parkhurst (D, Columbus Crew), Anton Walkes (D, Tottenham H, Eng), Miguel Almiron (M, Lanus, Arg), Yamil Asad (M, Velez Sarsfield, Arg), Jeff Larentowicz (M, LA Galaxy), Chris McCann (M, Wigan Athletic, Eng), Hector Villalba (M, San Lorenzo, Arg), Kenwyne Jones (F, Cardiff City, Eng), Josef Martinez (F, Torino, Ita), Brandon Vazquez (F, Tijuana, Mex).

CHICAGO FIRE

Coach: Veljko Paunovic
Arrivals: Jorge Rodrigo Bava (G, Atletico Bucaramanga, Col), Juninho (M, Tijuana, Mex), Dax McCarty (M, New York Red Bulls), Nemanja Nikolic (F, Legia Warsaw, Pol).

COLORADO RAPIDS

Coach: Pablo Mastroeni
Arrivals: Bismark Adjei-Boateng (M, Manchester City, Eng), Alan Gordon (F, LA Galaxy).

COLUMBUS CREW

Coach: Greg Berhalter
Arrivals: Jonathan Mensah (D, Anzhi, Rus), Jukka Raitala (D, Sogndal, Nor), Mohammed Abu (M, Stromsgodset, Nor), Cristian Martinez (M, Chorrillo, Pan) Abuchi Obinwa (M, Hanover, Ger).

DALLAS

Coach: Fernando Clavijo
Arrivals: Anibal Chala (D, El Nacional, Ecu), Hernan Grana (D, All Boys, Arg), Carlos Cermeno (M, Tachira, Ven), Roland Lamah (M, Ferencvaros, Hun), Javier Morales (M, Real Salt Lake), Cristian Colman (F, Nacional, Par).

DC UNITED

Coach: Ben Olsen
Arrivals: Sebastien Le Toux (F, Colorado Rapids), Jose Guillermo Ortiz (F, Saprissa, CR).

HOUSTON DYNAMO

Coach Wilmar Cabrera
Arrivals: AJ DeLaGarza (D, LA Galaxy), Leonardo (D, LA Galaxy), Adolfo Machado (D, Saprissa, CR), Juan David Cabezas (M, Deportivo Cali, Col), Jose Escalante (M, Olimpia, Hnd), Alberth Elis (F, Monterrey, Mex), Romell Quioto (F, Olimpia, Hnd), Vicente Sanchez (F, Defensor Sporting, Uru), Erick Torres (F, Cruz Azul, Mex).

LA GALAXY

Coach: Curt Onalfo
Arrivals: Romain Alessandrini (M, Marseille, Fra), Jermaine Jones

Minnesota boss ...Adrian Heath

Welcome...Gerardo Martino (centre)

(M, Colorado Rapids), Joao Pedro (M, Vitoria Guimaraes, Por), Jack McBean (F, Coventry City, Eng).

MINNESOTA UNITED

Coach: Adrian Heath
Arrivals: John Alvbage (GK, IFK Gothenburg, Swe), Francisco Calvo (D, Saprissa, CR), Vadim Demidov (D, Brann, Nor), Miguel Ibarra (M, Leon, Mex), Rasmus Schueller (M, Hacken Sweden), Bashkim Kadrii (F, Copenhagen, Den).

MONTREAL IMPACT

Coach: Mauro Biello
Arrivals: none.

NEW ENGLAND REVOLUTION

Coach: Jay Heaps
Arrivals: Benjamin Angoua (D, Guingamp, Fra), Antonio Mlinar Delamea (D, Olimpija Ljubljana, Sln).

NEW YORK CITY

Coach: Patrick Vieira
Arrivals: Alexander Callens (D, Numancia, Spa), Miguel Camargo (M, Chorillo, Pan), Alexander Ring (M, Kaiserslautern, Ger).

NEW YORK RED BULLS

Coach: Jesse Marsch
Arrivals: Hassan Ndam (D, Rainbow, Cam), Anatole Abang (F, Hobro, Den).

ORLANDO CITY

Coach: Jason Kreis
Arrivals: Josh Saunders (GK, New York City), Jonathan Spector (D, Birmingham City, Eng), Danny Toia (D, Montreal Impact), Will Johnson (M, Toronto).

PHILADELPHIA UNION

Coach: Jim Curtin
Arrivals: Oguchi Onyewu (D, Charlton Athletic, Eng), Giliano Wijnaldum (D, Bochum, Ger), Haris Medunjanin (M, Maccabi Tel Aviv, Isr), Fafa Picault (F, St Pauli, Ger), Jay Simpson (F, Leyton Orient, Eng).

PORTLAND TIMBERS

Coach: Caleb Porter
Arrivals: Jeff Attinella (GK, Real Salt Lake), Roy Miller (D, Saprissa, CR), Sebastian Blanco (M, San Lorenzo, Arg), Daniel Guzman (M, Saprissa, CR), Dairon Asprilla (F, Millonarios, Col).

LA new boys...Jermaine Jones (no13) and Jack McBean (no32)

REAL SALT LAKE

Coach: Jeff Cassar
Arrivals: David Horst (D, Houston Dynamo), Albert Rusnak (M, Groningen, Hol), Chad Barrett (F, San Jose Earthquakes), Brooks Lennon (F, Liverpool, Eng), Sebastian Saucedo (F, Veracruz, Mex).

Timbers... Jeff Attinella

SAN JOSE EARTHQUAKES

Coach: Dominic Kinnear
Arrivals: Harold Cummings (D, Alajuelense, CR), Florian Jungwirth (D, Darmstadt, Ger), Jahmir Hyka (M, Lucerne, Swi), Danny Hoesen (F, Groningen, Hol), Marcos Urena (F, Brondby, Den).

SEATTLE SOUNDERS

Coach: Brian Schmetzer
Arrivals: Gustav Svensson (M, Guangzhou R&F, Chn), Will Bruin (F, Houston Dynamo).

SPORTING KANSAS CITY

Coach: Peter Vermes
Arrivals: Igor Juliao (D, Fluminense, Bra), Erik Palmer-Brown (D, Porto, Por), Ilie (M, Elche, Spa), Latif Blessing (F, Liberty Professionals, Gha), Gerso Fernandes (F, Belenenses, Por), Daniel Salloi (F, Gyirmot, Hun).

TORONTO

Coach: Greg Vanney
Arrivals: Chris Mavinga (D, Rubin Kazan, Rus).

VANCOUVER WHITECAPS

Coach: Carl Robinson
Arrivals: none.

MLS 2017

1 Atlanta United
2 Chicago Fire
3 Colorado Rapids
4 Columbus Crew
5 Dallas
6 DC United
7 Houston Dynamo
8 LA Galaxy
9 Minnesota United
10 Montreal Impact
11 New England Revolution
12 New York City
New York Red Bulls
13 Orlando City
14 Philadelphia Union
15 Portland Timbers
16 Real Salt Lake
17 San Jose Earthquakes
18 Seattle Sounders
19 Sporting Kansas City
20 Toronto
21 Vancouver Whitecaps

Libertadores Cup

TIM VICKERY

New calendar, new problems

European transfers to cause even more chaos with extended programme

The saga of reigning Libertadores champions, Atletico Nacional of Colombia, helps explain why this year's extended competition will be more unpredictable than ever. Nacional lost players between winning their domestic league title and the start of last year's Libertadores. They lost players during the six-week pause between quarter and semi-finals. They lost players after they won the trophy. And they have lost some more since the Club World Cup.

This constant selling has become the norm – and the price of success – in South American club football. And that is likely to have an even greater impact on this year's Libertadores, which instead of being squeezed into the opening semester now goes on until the end of November, with the decisive stage taking place after clubs are likely to have sold some of their best players in the European summer transfer window.

Nacional lost a number of their players to Brazil, which underlines the financial advantage currently enjoyed by clubs in that country. A recent survey into the value of Libertadores squads revealed that the top three, and six of the top seven, come from Brazil. Yet the failure of Brazilian clubs to dominate the tournament in recent years is further proof of the crisis of ideas in its game.

Despite that, Brazil's Libertadores entrants this year must surely be at the top of the list of the favourites. Domestic champions **Palmeiras** are sound financially, boosted by a rebuilt stadium and have signed Atletico Nacional goalgetter Miguel Borja for $10.5million. They have, however, lost star striker Gabriel Jesus to Manchester City while coach Cuca also jumped ship. The team will have to adapt to the different approach of the relatively untried Eduardo Baptista, who will adopt a 4-1-4-1 formation and a less-frenetic approach.

Santos, on the other hand, reap the benefit of continuity. A second spell in charge for Dorival Junior began back in June 2015, and with key international midfielder Lucas Lima continuing to reject overtures from China, Santos have an attractive team. However, they will need to improve their record away from home, which has been mystifyingly poor over the last 18 months.

Flamengo exceeded expectations last year and have subsequently worked at improving their squad. The lack of a genuine home ground is a worry, with the Maracana caught up in a political battle, but they put in a respectable challenge for the league title last year despite being forced to live a nomadic existence. All five Libertadores campaigns this century have been a disappointment, so better things will be expected, even though their group is a tough one.

The last Brazilian winners of the trophy were **Atletico Mineiro** in 2013 and their deficiencies were horribly exposed a few months later in the Club World Cup. New coach Roger Machado has the mission of correcting those same defects and coaxing a talented squad into staying more compact on the field. Time should be on his side – the group looks straightforward enough – and Atletico could develop into genuine challengers.

Machado's previous club **Gremio** have also done well from the draw, giving Renato Gaucho time to replace international midfielder Walace, who has joined Hamburg. Since 2011, Gremio's four campaigns have all ended in second-round elimination and they may not have enough to go much further this time.

Before Atletico Nacional, the two preceding champions were from Argentina, and both are back this year.

Winners in 2015, **River Plate** have attacking quality in Lucas Alario and Sebastian Driussi, but coach Marcelo Gallardo has some serious thinking to do about his defence. And Diego Aguirre's **San Lorenzo**, the 2014 champions, look solid enough but would seem to have lost some quality in the January transfer window – perhaps a consequence of the institutional crisis in which Argentinian football is wallowing.

Winners in 2009, **Estudiantes** are preparing to return to their rebuilt stadium later this year and have the fascinating return to action of Juan Sebastian Veron, now player-president – putting coach Nelson Vivas in the strange position of being both his boss and his subordinate. But even if Veron can still pull the midfield strings as he approaches 42, it is hard to see where the attacking quality will come from, especially with the sale

Competitive... Sante Fe coach Gustavo Costas

> This year, Brazil's Libertadores entrants must surely be at the top of the list of the favourites

Veteran...Juan Sebastian Veron of Estudiantes

Excitement... Palmeiras, with midfielder Tche Tche, are expected do well in this year's tournament

of Carlos Auzqui to River Plate.

It could even be that the most interesting Argentinian challenge will come from unheralded **Lanus**. Jorge Almiron's side may not be quite as good as the one that claimed the domestic title in the middle of last year, but they have a well-defined identity, with a 4-3-3 system now ingrained in the club's DNA. Their group is not the toughest, and if they can pick up momentum they are capable of reaching the quarter-finals, as they did in their best ever campaign in 2014.

Last year **Atletico Nacional** became the first club from outside Brazil and Argentina to lift the trophy since 2008. A fixture pile-up at the end of the year gave them the chance to give some experience to the next generation, and although they will miss Borja, former internationals Dayro Moreno and Aldo Leao Ramirez head the list of acquisitions. If the team can click during the campaign their chances should not be ruled out. And reigning Colombian champions **Santa Fe**, under ultra-competitive Argentinian coach Gustavo Costas, may also be tough nuts to crack.

There is always room for surprises in the Libertadores Cup and, although a Chilean success story would be highly unexpected, **Universidad Catolica** should be worth watching after dominating domestic football last year. True, star centre-forward Nico Castillo has moved on to Mexico and it is hard to see how he can be replaced. But Mario Salas' squad, full of home grown youngsters, added some experience over the course of last year and they cannot be discounted.

Further north, **Barcelona** of Guayaquil were just as dominant in Ecuador. Under Uruguayan coach Guillermo Almada, the foundation of their league success was a sound defensive unit, which must have been weakened by the sale of centre-back Anderson Ordonez to Eintracht Frankfurt. Talented replacements are available, though – and if little Independiente del Valle can go all the way to the Final, as they did last year, then that should serve as inspiration for the country's most impressive side.

And providing they can fight their way through the qualifying round, then **The Strongest** of Bolivia might be worth a look in the category of rank outsiders. They appear to have improved their performances away from the extreme altitude of La Paz – last year they even beat Sao Paulo in Brazil. They have a canny coach in Cesar Farias of Venezuela and they ended 2016 on a high, staging a late rally to pip local rivals Bolivar to the league title. If they can carry that momentum into the 2017 Libertadores then they could do some damage. WS

KEY DATES

GROUP STAGE STARTS
MARCH 7, 2017

GROUP STAGE ENDS
MAY 25, 2017

K/O ROUNDS BEGIN
JULY 4, 2017

FINAL
NOV 22 & 29, 2017

Glenn Moore

'England were very lucky to have her'

Kelly Smith calls it a day

Kelly Smith was eight when it became clear she was going to be a special footballer. That was when she was forced out of the boys' team she played for by parents of their opponents, unhappy at watching a little girl run rings around their embarrassed sons. Other teams refused to play if she was in the side.

There have been plenty of opposition bosses since who would have welcomed that option. Smith, who has announced her retirement after a glittering career, went on to become the greatest female footballer England has produced and one of the very best of her generation globally.

Between 2006 and 2009 she was voted into the top five in the FIFA Women's World Player of the Year award four years in a row, coming third in 2009. Current holder, the USA's Olympic and World Cup winner Carli Lloyd – who recently signed for Manchester City – described Smith as the best she had played with.

England's record scorer, with 46 goals in 117 appearances, Smith also created many more, having begun her career as a left-winger, before moving to centre-forward, then number 10, and ending it in midfield.

Her career oscillated between Arsenal and the US, where she became the first English woman to play professionally, spending roughly a decade at each. In three spells with Arsenal she won 20 major trophies including the UEFA Women's Cup – the forerunner to the UEFA Champions League. The last of those honours was one of the most savoured: the 2016 Women's FA Cup Final, against then-champions Chelsea, in front of 32,912 at Wembley.

"That was the icing on the cake," says Smith. "I knew it could be my last season and I wanted to play as much as possible and try and win trophies. To win the FA Cup at Wembley, going up the steps to get the cup with the club I love after playing our local rivals, was to go out on a high."

Retirement was not, she admits, a difficult decision: "I felt it was time. I am 38. I've had a good innings. I wasn't playing a lot and wanted to go out on my own terms, not to fade away."

Smith is staying at Arsenal, moving into a full-time coaching role having been assisting on a part-time basis since 2013. She is taking her UEFA A licence and has ambitions to manage Arsenal, then England, but adds: "Just because you are a good player does not necessarily mean you'll be a good coach, so I'm gaining my qualifications, gaining experience, starting at the bottom of the ladder."

Her immediate focus, however, is as much on her domestic as professional life, having also announced she is pregnant. For female athletes the decision to have children is inevitably far more complicated than for males. For most of Smith's time with England, only Katie Chapman was a mother. Parent-players are more common in the US, where childcare arrangements are more established, but Germany's Fatmire Alushi (nee Bajramaj) has not played since becoming a mother in 2015 and France's Louisa Cadamuro (nee Necib) retired at 29 to become a mum.

"When I stopped playing I decided to try for a baby, and luckily it happened very quickly," says Smith.

But fortune has not always been on Smith's side. She suffered badly from injuries, some caused by poor tackles committed by less-talented players, some aggravated through a desire, often shared by her managers, to play when not fully fit. Injuries blighted several appearances at major championships, though she managed four goals when England belatedly made their World Cup debut, in China in 2007, and scored in the defeat to Germany in the 2009 Euro Final.

Injuries had another damaging effect, with Smith becoming dependent on vodka as she struggled with loneliness and depression after suffering a broken leg playing in America in 2004. However, she came through that, returning to England and regaining her fitness and form.

Along the way she became a role model for aspiring female footballers. By demonstrating how well English women could play she helped lift the status of the national team overseas and the sport's profile at home. When she started, players had to pay to play; she retires with six-figure contracts being offered and several WSL teams significantly integrated with their male counterparts.

"I'm proud of my pioneering role and having players look up to me, but there is a tiny bit of envy when I find myself wishing I was 10 years younger," she reveals. "England were not very good when I started, now we are fifth in the world. Arsenal just had to turn up to win

> "She will be remembered as one of the greatest players to have played the game"
>
> England manager Mark Sampson

Leading the way... Kelly Smith has been a role model for English female footballers

Century...with her 100th England cap

Satisfaction...winning the FA Cup at Wembley

some games; now the WSL is competitive with bigger crowds.

"The sport has grown steadily and is in a good place. I trained part-time, two nights a week, now there are full-time professionals in England."

It is telling that she is more envious of the greater profile of the game, and the chance to train full-time, than of the money. This is the girl who used to "go over the field, chalk circles on the wall, and kick a ball at it, working on my touch and technique. I had a ball at my feet four or five hours a day. Then I'd go home and watch videos of Ryan Giggs or Ian Wright."

And the practice certainly paid off. "She will be remembered as one of the greatest players to have played the game," according to England manager Mark Sampson, while captain and former club-mate Steph Houghton says: "She inspired me throughout my career.

"Women's football wouldn't be where it is today without her contribution. England were very lucky to have her." WS

Round-up

Simply the best...Carli Lloyd

AMERICAN EXPORTS CONTINUE

The trans-Atlantic talent drain continues, with Carli Lloyd – the reigning FIFA women's player of the year – signing for Manchester City. The 34-year-old arrives from Houston Dash on a short-term contract until early June.

Heather O'Reilly, who retired from the US team after winning 231 caps, three Olympics and a World Cup, joined Arsenal from Kansas City.

Veteran Casey Stoney left the Gunners for Liverpool, while fellow England international Ellen White made the switch from Notts County to Birmingham City.

In France, Paris Saint-Germain made two notable short-term acquisitions bringing in Amandine Henry, once a fixture at rivals Lyon, on loan from Portland Thorns, and Brazilian veteran Formiga.

CAPITAL TRIUMPH IN AUSTRALIA

Canberra United were surprise winners of Australia's W-League Premiership, led by goalscoring captain Ash Sykes. However, in the post-season play-offs they lost to defending champions Melbourne City, beaten by an extra-time goal from Welsh player-coach Jess Fishlock. Melbourne City retained their title with a 2-0 victory over Perth Glory in the Grand Final.

Hot shot...Ash Sykes of Canberra United

In charge...Sarina Wiegman (left)

DUTCH PROMOTE WIEGMAN

Sarina Wiegman, who won more than a century of caps for Holland as a player, has stepped up from assistant and is the new coach of the national team, who will host this summer's European Championship.

Sweden striker Sofia Jakobsson and France midfielder Delphine Cascarino are likely to miss the finals with serious knee injuries. Both have suffered anterior cruciate ligament damage, which female players appear especially vulnerable to.

US TV DEAL

America's NWSL signed a landmark three-year TV deal with Lifetime, a female-orientated network rather than a sports channel, but with greater reach than Fox Sports or ESPN.

Under the new deal, non-televised matches will continue to be streamed free-of-charge online, which is a key factor in the league's growth.

In preparation for the new season, Seattle Reign have signed Canadian international Diana Matheson from Washington Spirit and Australia's Lisa Crummer from Melbourne City.

Paul Riley, who led New York Western Flash to the league title last season, has agreed to remain at the club after the franchise moved to North Carolina.

JANUARY 19-FEBRUARY 14, 2017

Global diary

A comprehensive record of recent events around the world

Five...goalscorer Lukas Podolski celebrates with team-mates

Friday January 20

ENGLAND: Manchester United sell Memphis Depay to French side Lyon for a fee that could reach £25m.
GERMANY: The German Football Federation says it will bid to host the European Championship in 2024.
MALAYSIA: Kedah beat Johor Darul Ta'zim on penalties to win the Malaysian Charity Shield.
TIMOR-LESTE: The Asian Football Confederation bans Timor-Leste from the 2023 AFC Asian Cup for falsifying the passports of 12 Brazilian-born players.
TOGO: Fans vandalise the home of Kossi Agassa in the Togolese capital Lome after the keeper is blamed for the country's 3-1 loss to Morocco in the African Nations Cup in Gabon.

Saturday January 21

BRAZIL: Playing their first game since the plane crash which killed 19 of their players, Chapecoense draw 2-2 in a friendly with league champions Palmeiras.
ENGLAND: Swansea City move off the bottom of the league and out of the relegation zone with a 3-2 win at Liverpool. Wayne Rooney's goal in a 1-1 draw at Stoke City is his 250th for Manchester United and sets a new club record. Tottenham Hotspur come from two down to draw 2-2 at Manchester City.
MEXICO: In a repeat of the Apertura Final, reigning champions Tigres beat Club America 4-2 in the Liga MX.
WALES: The New Saints substitute Chris Seargeant grabs a 12-minute hat-trick as his side beat Barry Town United 4-0 to win the Welsh League Cup for a third successive season.

Sunday January 22

ENGLAND: Hull City midfielder Ryan Mason has to undergo emergency surgery after he fractures his skull in a 2-0 defeat at Chelsea. Arsenal manager Arsene Wenger is sent off as his side beat Burnley 2-1.
GABON: A 0-0 draw with Cameroon sees Gabon become the first African Nations Cup hosts to fail to get out of the group phase for 23 years.
HONDURAS: With a 1-0 victory over Belize, Honduras claim the Copa Centroamericana for a fourth time.
TURKEY: Istanbul Basaksehir's Emre Belozoglu plays his 300th Turkish top-flight game as the league leaders lose 1-0 at Fenerbahce.

Monday January 23

TURKEY: Besiktas win 4-1 away to Alanyaspor 4-1 and go two points clear at top of the table.

Tuesday January 24

ALGERIA: Georges Leekens quits as coach of Algeria the day after they draw 2-2 with Senegal and exit the African Nations Cup at the group stage without winning a game.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain stay on course for a fourth straight French League Cup after beating Bordeaux 4-1 in the semi-finals.
ITALY: Eugenio Corini resigns as Palermo coach two days after a 1-0 loss at home to Internazionale left the club in the relegation zone.
IVORY COAST: The African Nations Cup holders go out of this year's tournament after losing 1-0 to Morocco, who are coached by Herve Renard – the man who led Ivory Coast to the title in 2015.
PHILIPPINES: Global FC, the first Philippines club to play in the AFC Champions League, beat Singapore's Tampines Rovers 2-0 in preliminary round one.
TURKEY: Lukas Podolski scores five as Galatasaray thrash Erzincanspor 6-2 in the Turkish Cup.
UEFA: The Court of Arbitration for Sport dismisses an appeal from the Football Association of Serbia to annul Kosovo's UEFA membership.

Wednesday January 25

BRAZIL: Dudu scores the only goal of the game as Brazil beat Colombia 1-0 in a friendly that raises more than £300,000 for the families of the Chapecoense players and staff who were killed in November's plane crash on route to Medellin.
ENGLAND: Southampton reach their first major Final since 2003, beating Liverpool 1-0 at Anfield to win the League Cup semi-final 2-0 on aggregate.
FRANCE: Paris Saint-Germain sign Benfica winger Goncalo Guedes for €30m. Monaco will face PSG in the French League Cup Final after they beat Nancy 1-0.
GERMANY: Darmstadt and their

Starting again...one of Chapecoense's many loan signings, left-back Emilio Zeballos (in green) gets the better of Palmeiras' Vitinho

Tunisian midfielder Anis Ben-Hatira part company by mutual consent after club president Klaus Rudiger Fritsch calls his involvement with the Islamic Salafist sect "wrong".

ITALY: Holders Juventus beat Milan 2-1 in the Italian Cup quarter-finals in a repeat of last year's Final.

SCOTLAND: Scott Brown makes his 400th appearance for Celtic as they beat St Johnstone 1-0 to go 22 points clear at the top of the table.

SPAIN: Real Madrid miss out on the Spanish Cup semi-finals for a third season in a row, drawing 2-2 at Celta Vigo and losing 4-3 on aggregate.

Thursday January 26

ENGLAND: Jose Mourinho will have the chance to equal the record of four League Cup wins, held by Alex Ferguson and Brian Clough, as his Manchester United side lose 2-1 at Hull City but win 3-2 on aggregate to reach the Final on February 26.

ITALY: Former Cagliari and Bologna coach Diego Lopez takes charge ➤

Out...Real Madrid's Cristiano Ronaldo

HONDURAS

BRYAN KAY

Another title for Pinto

Honduras win regional tournament in Panama

January's Copa Centroamericana win in Panama represented a fourth Central American title for Honduras and a third for coach Jorge Luis Pinto, who led Costa Rica to victory in 2005 and 2013. But after leaving *Los Ticos* in 2014, it took Pinto some time to find his feet as coach of struggling Honduras.

After finishing fifth at the Copa Centroamericana in 2015, his new charges only scraped into that year's CONCACAF Gold Cup by beating French Guiana 3-0 at home in a play-off after losing the first leg 3-1. *Los Catrachos* were, however, worthy winners of this year's regional tournament, even though they were missing some experienced faces due to the competition taking place outside a FIFA international window.

After going a goal down against Nicaragua, Pinto's side came back to win their opening three games in Panama City before meeting his former employers. And a 1-1 draw with Costa Rica meant the title would be secured with a win against Belize in their final game, in which the tournament's top scorer Eddie Hernandez duly obliged with his third goal of the 10 days.

The holders, Cost Rica, were without Bryan Ruiz, Joel Campbell and Keylor Navas and won just one game, against Belize. In addition to the draw with Honduras, they were also held by Nicaragua and El Salvador, but still managed to sneak into fourth place for the last guaranteed Gold Cup spot. Panama and El Salvador, in second and third respectively, were the other qualifiers, along with winners Honduras.

And while coming fifth may not be seen as a success for many sides, for Nicaragua it represents a sign of much-improved progress under coach Henry Duarte. They now face a play-off against Haiti, who finished fifth in the Caribbean Cup, for the last remaining spot in the Gold Cup.

Bottom of the pile were Belize, who failed to win a game. They did, however, start their campaign with a promising 0-0 draw against hosts and relative big guns Panama, and Richard Orlowski, who was installed as coach in the run-up to the tournament, saw enough to see hope for future improvement.

> *Los Catrachos* were worthy winners of this year's regional tournament, even though they were missing some experienced faces

Before the Gold Cup in July, attentions turn to the next round of World Cup qualifiers in March. And for Honduras that means a trip to the USA, who lost their two opening games, and a home fixture against Costa Rica, who are top of the qualifying table with six points out of six. With only three guaranteed places available to CONCACAF sides, those two matches could be key to determining who goes to Russia next year. WS

Champions...Jorge Pinto with his Honduras side

Burundi

STEVE MENARY

Local diamonds can shine

Talent is there despite internal troubles

Politics and football are often inseparable in Africa, and this is epitomised as well as anywhere in Burundi, where the controversial born-again Christian president, Pierre Nkurunziza, famously tours the country in style with his veterans' team, Haleluya FC, as internal strife tears at the land-locked east African state.

Hundreds of thousands of Burundians have fled the country as Nkurunziza clings on to power. Yet in spite of everything there is a real depth of footballing talent in the country, according to German coach Michael Weiss, who worked in Burundi in 2016 and previously coached in Rwanda for four years.

In economic terms, Rwanda has far outpaced its unsettled neighbour, but Weiss has no doubt which has the better football prospects, stating: "It's full of talent. Burundi is the day and Rwanda is the night. Burundi is far ahead as far as football talent and development is concerned. The talent is incredible."

Weiss coached at Vital'O, who have won the Burundi Premier League a record 20 times and regularly taken part in the CAF club competitions, before leaving for Asia. However, he remains keen to return to a country where, despite the economic problems, his players were full-time professionals who earned around $200 a month.

"If there was a really good national coach, they could really achieve something," says Weiss. "If these boys are treated well and they go to the gym and get $400 or $500 a month they can be diamonds."

Vital'O have won the last two league titles and have better resources than many Burundian sides, including rivals Messenger Ngozi, who qualified for this year's CAF Confederations Cup after beating Vital'O on penalties in the 2016 Burundi Cup Final.

Serbian coach Momcilo Medic, who been in charge at Messenger Ngozi for the last two years, says: "Most clubs do not pay players, or pay very little. Salaries are around $50. My players have no salary and most of them between 18 and 24 years go to school. In part, to help them, the club pay school fees, but not always.

"Players who have qualities are leaving the country very quickly. The quality of the league is on a solid level, but not even close to Ghana or Nigeria. They go to neighbouring countries like Rwanda, Tanzania, Congo. Several play in South Africa."

Getting spotted for a contract overseas is difficult according to Peter Van Meerten, who runs the INTWARI Soccer Academy in Bujumbura with Pierre Abega, and explains: "Due to the political problems and tense region, Burundi has not that many scouts or football agents.

"I think that they are missing something. Burundian players are a mix between the strong western African players and the eastern Africans with their endurance."

Going to South Africa has provided a huge leap for the national team's star striker, Fiston Abdul Razak, who scored all three of Burundi's goals in a 3-0 aggregate win over Seychelles in the first round of the 2018 World Cup qualifiers. After leaving the Lydia Ludic Burundi Academic team in 2014 for Sofapaka in Kenya, he later earned himself a deal at Mamelodi Sundowns. However, the 25-year-old has found it hard to breakthrough and he went on loan to Bloemfontein Celtic last year.

Burundi lost to DR Congo in the second round of the World Cup qualifiers, and after beating Seychelles home

Optimistic...coach Michael Weiss

Pressure...Burundi on the defensive against Senegal in an African Nations Cup qualifier

> "Burundi is the day and Rwanda is the night. Burundi is far ahead as far as football talent and development is concerned"
>
> German coach Michael Weiss

Keen...Burundian president Pierre Nkurunziza trains with ASEC Mimosas

WHERE IN THE WORLD?

The former Belgian colony secured independence in 1962 after a period of trusteeship under the United Nations.

Size 28,830 sq km
Population 10.7 million
Capital Bujumbura
Language Kirundi, French
Religion Roman Catholic, Protestant

and away in 2015, they failed to win a game last year and missed out on the African Nations Cup in Gabon.

For all the promise and talent, the political and economic problems weigh heavy on the attempts of the side who are known as *Les Hirondelles* ("the swallows") to fly.

"As long as there is the tension in the region, the facilities are not up to date and most of all the training activities not brought to a higher level it will be very hard to make the big step," concludes Van Meerten. Until then, the Swallows will struggle to take wing. WS

Champions...Vital'O have won the league title 20 times

➤ of struggling Palermo.

PORTUGAL: Leading 1-0 at half-time, Benfica lose 3-1 at Moreirense in the Portuguese League Cup semi-finals, having won the competition for seven of the last eight years.

QATAR: Ex-Barcelona midfielder Xavi, 37, agrees a contract extension with Al Sadd that will keep him at the club until 2018.

Friday January 27

FRANCE: New signing Patrice Evra makes his debut and Bafetimbi Gomis scores a hat-trick as Marseille beat Montpellier 5-1.

Saturday January 28

ARGENTINA: Three players, both coaches and an assistant coach are sent off in a friendly between Boca Juniors and River Plate, which the latter win 2-0.

ENGLAND: Three days after exiting the League Cup at Anfield, Liverpool lose 2-1 at home to Wolverhampton Wanderers in the FA Cup. Non-league Lincoln City win 3-1 against Championship leaders Brighton.

GERMANY: The last unbeaten record in Europe's top five leagues ends as Hoffenheim lose 2-1 at RB Leipzig. Trailing 2-0 at half-time, Borussia Monchengladbach come back to beat Bayer Leverkusen 3-2 in the Rhine derby.

ITALY: Internazionale beat Pescara 3-0 to make it seven straight league wins and go fourth, above Lazio who lose 1-0 at home to Chievo.

SCOTLAND: Kris Boyd scores the quickest goal in Scottish Premiership history, after just 10.4 seconds, as Kilmarnock beat Ross County 3-2.

SYRIA: War-torn Aleppo hosts its first game in five years as Al Ittihad beat city rivals Al Hurriya 2-1.

Sunday January 29

BOLIVIA: Apertura champions The Strongest lose their opening game of the Clausura 3-0 at Guabira, who finished bottom last time out.

COLOMBIA: Finalizacion winners Santa Fe beat Apertura champions Independiente Medellin 1-0 to win the Colombian Superleague play-off.

ENGLAND: A second non-league team reach the last 16 of the FA Cup as Sutton United beat Leeds United 1-0. Premier League Watford are beaten 1-0 at third-tier Millwall.

FRANCE: Bernardo Silva's injury-time goal earns Monaco a 1-1 draw at Paris Saint-Germain and a return to the top of the table.

IVORY COAST: Michel Dussuyer quits as Ivory Coast coach following his side's African Nations Cup exit.

PORTUGAL: Moreirense claim their first major trophy, beating Braga 1-0 in the League Cup Final.

SCOTLAND: Celtic beat Hearts 4-0 to set a new club record of 27 domestic games without defeat.

SPAIN: Luis Suarez scores a 90th-minute equaliser as Barcelona draw 1-1 at Real Betis.

USA: Jozy Altidore wins his 100th cap as Bruce Arena begins his second stint as US coach with a goalless draw against Serbia.

VENEZUELA: Last year's overall champions Zamora kick off this year's Apertura campaign with a 3-1 victory over Aragua.

History...Moreirense celebrate winning the Portuguese League Cup

Monday January 30

ENGLAND: Adam Lallana is named England player of the year for 2016 with 39 per cent of the vote from England Supporters Club members.

Tuesday January 31

ENGLAND: Arsenal lose 2-1 at home to Watford and fall nine points behind leaders Chelsea, who draw 1-1 at Liverpool.

TURKEY: A free agent since leaving Crystal Palace in the summer, Emmanuel Adebayor joins Istanbul Basaksehir on an 18-month contract.

Wednesday February 1

FRANCE: Monaco need extra time to beat third-tier hosts Chambly 5-4 in the French Cup, despite leading 3-0 early in the second half.

HOLLAND: Former France striker Nicolas Anelka joins Eredivisie club Roda JC in a consultancy role.

NORWAY: Lars Lagerback replaces Per-Mathias Hogmo, who stepped down in November, as Norway coach.

SPAIN: Cup-holders Barcelona win 2-1 at Atletico Madrid in the first ➤

Japan

MIKE PLASTOW

Antlers on a roll

Club World Cup finalists are the team to beat

League champions, Emperor's Cup winners and runners-up in the Club World Cup, Kashima Antlers certainly ended last year with a bang. And with the J.League now restored to a conventional, season-long format, this term's title race is set to be the most intense for years.

Having finished 15 points behind Urawa Red Diamonds in 2016's overall table, Antlers had an extraordinary December, during which they lifted their eighth J.League crown and then beat the champions of Oceania, Africa and South America to become the first Asian side to reach the Club World Cup Final, where two quality strikes from Gaku Shibasaki took Real Madrid to extra time.

Shibasaki has since gone on loan to Spanish second-tier side Tenerife in Spain, but Antlers have plenty of other young talent coming through, with central defenders Gen Shoji and Naomichi Ueda both knocking on the door of the national side.

Joining Masatada Ishii's title-winning squad are Brazilian strikers Pedro Junior from Vissel Kobe and Leandro on loan from Palmeiras, defensive midfielder Leo Silva from Albirex Niigata and South Korea keeper Kwoun Sun-tae from the Asian champions Jeonbuk Motors. The latter two signings make perfect sense in view of the advancing age of Antlers veterans Mitsuo Ogasawara and Hitoshi Sogahata, who are both 37.

Although Kobe's overtures to Galatasaray's German striker Lukas Podolski did grab the headlines in pre-season for a while, there were few big-money moves, despite the huge influx of broadcasting and ICT money from the Perform and NTT group – a 10-year contract that is thought to be worth 210 billion yen (about £1.5bn).

Most Japanese clubs still prefer to base their global strategies on local thinking, and last year's big three seem happy to carry on from where they left off last time out, having all made such huge progress over the previous 12 months.

Top of the table for the first time in 10 years, Reds lost to Antlers in the Championship stage Final and ended the season with only the League Cup to show for their efforts.

Reds are Japan's best-supported club but their close-season spending was even more modest than that of Antlers, despite coach Mihailo Petrovic starting his sixth season at the helm and facing a huge task in re-launching their title challenge yet again.

Huge task...Reds' Mihailo Petrovic

While there were no major departures, Petrovic has made a few interesting local additions. Ado Onaiwu, a striker from JEF United Chiba who has a Japanese mother and Nigerian father, played for Japan in the Rio Olympic qualifiers, while Brazilian forward Rafael Silva scored 11 goals for struggling Albirex Niigata last season. Reds have also snapped up an experienced keeper, Tetsuya Enomoto, from Yokohama F Marinos.

Kawasaki Frontale were 13 points better than Antlers but finished third in the play-offs and were runners-up in the Emperor's Cup. Their 36-year-old skipper Kengo Nakamura was named the J.League Player of the Year for 2016, but the only titles the club has ever won remain the second division championships of 1999 and 2004.

Toru Oniki will be in charge for the forthcoming campaign but he will have to make do without Yoshito Okubo, the J.League's all-time top scorer who joined FC Tokyo. Coming in are forwards Rhayner Santos on loan from Ponte Preto and Akihiro Ienaga from Omiya Ardija.

If you add Sanfrecce Hiroshima – who have replaced veteran striker Hisato Sato with Masato Kudo from Vancouver Whitecaps – and Gamba Osaka to the mix, there is a distinct gap between the top five and the rest of the league. WS

Final...Daigo Nishi of Antlers (right) and Frontale's Shintaro Kurumaya in the Emperor's Cup Final

New...Hiroshima's Masato Kudo

Preview

J1 LEAGUE: 2017

1 Albirex Niigata
2 Cerezo Osaka
Gamba Osaka
3 Consadole Sapporo
4 Jubilo Iwata
5 Kashima Antlers (Gt Tokyo)
Kashiwa Reysol
Kawasaki Frontale
Omiya Ardija
Tokyo
Urawa Red Diamonds
Yokohama F Marinos
6 Sagan Tosu
7 Sanfrecce Hiroshima
8 Shimizu-Pulse (Shizuoka)
9 Vegalta Sendai
10 Ventforet Kofu
11 Vissel Kobe

KEY DATES
Season starts: February 25, 2017
Season ends: December 1, 2017

➤ leg of their semi-final.

Thursday February 2

GERMANY: Bayer Leverkusen midfielder Hakan Calhanoglu is banned for four months for breach of contract after Turkish club Trabzonspor lodged a claim with FIFA that he had agreed to join them from Karlsruhe in 2011, but then stayed in Germany.

Friday February 3

SPAIN: Atletico Madrid defender Lucas Hernandez is arrested in the early hours of the morning on suspicion of assaulting his girlfriend.

Saturday February 4

ARGENTINA: Lanus beat River Plate 3-0 to win the Super Cup.
AUSTRALIA: Tim Cahill is sent off for dissent after protesting about a late goal while waiting to come on as a sub in Melbourne City's 2-1 loss to city rivals Melbourne Victory.
ENGLAND: Chelsea beat Arsenal 3-1 to go 12 points clear of their London rivals.
FRANCE: Monaco go three points clear at the top of Ligue 1 with a 3-0 victory over second-place Nice.
GERMANY: Philipp Lahm comes off the bench to make his 500th Bayern appearance as they draw 1-1 with Schalke.
HONDURAS: Roger Rojas' 94th-minute equaliser for Olimpia in the 2-2 Honduran *Superclasico* draw against Motagua is allowed to stand – despite a fan running onto the pitch and kicking a second ball into the goal at the same time.
ITALY: Marek Hamsik and Dries Mertens both score hat-tricks as Napoli beat Bologna 7-1 to record their biggest-ever Serie A away win.
PORTUGAL: Newly arrived from Guimaraes, Tiquinho scores twice on his debut as Porto beat Sporting 2-1.
SPAIN: Fernando Torres takes his all-time tally in La Liga to 100 with both goals in Atletico Madrid's 2-0 win at home to Leganes.

Sunday February 5

CAMEROON: Second-half goals from subs Nicolas N'Koulou and Vincent Aboubakar see Cameroon come from behind to beat Egypt 2-1 in the African Nations Cup Final.
ITALY: Juventus win the Derby d'Italia, beating Internazionale 1-0 with a goal from Juan Cuadrado. Marco Parolo scores four as Lazio win 6-2 at Pescara.
ROMANIA: Viitorul Constanta beat Dinamo Bucharest 2-1 to become the first team to reach the Romanian championship play-off round.
SCOTLAND: Second-half substitute Moussa Dembele scores a 24-minute hat-trick as Celtic beat St Johnstone 5-2.
TURKEY: Fenerbahce win 1-0 at Besiktas in the Turkish Cup with a goal from Robin Van Persie.
URUGUAY: Penarol wrap up the opening weekend of the Apertura campaign with a 4-0 victory over El Tanque Sisley.

Monday February 6

POLAND: Bayern Munich striker Robert Lewandowski is voted Poland's Player of the Year for the sixth time in a row.

Tuesday February 7

CHINA: Brazil midfielder Oscar scores on his competitive debut for Shanghai SIPG in a 3-0 victory over Thailand's Sukhothai in the AFC Champions League play-offs.

Off the mark...Oscar celebrates his first goal for Shanghai SIPG

ENGLAND: The 2017-18 Premier League season will start on Saturday August 12 and end on Sunday May 13, with the World Cup beginning less than five weeks later, on Thursday June 14.
GHANA: Avram Grant steps down as coach of Ghana, who lost in the African Nations Cup semi-finals.
HOLLAND: Ekrem Kahya is named interim boss of Den Haag after Zeljko Petrovic becomes the first Eredivisie coach to be sacked this season.
ITALY: Two cars parked outside the home of Pescara president Daniele Sebastiani are set on fire in an alleged arson attack in the early hours of the morning. Roma beat Fiorentina 4-0 to set a new club record of 14 consecutive home wins in Serie A.
SPAIN: Luis Suarez scores his eighth goal in eight games as Barcelona reach a fourth successive Spanish Cup Final with a 1-1 draw at home to Atletico Madrid, but the striker is also one of three players sent off.

Wednesday February 8

CHINA: Carlos Tevez's Shanghai Shenhua debut ends in defeat as ➤

➤ Brisbane Roar claim a 2-0 win in their Champions League play-off.
ITALY: Internazionale's 20-year-old midfielder Assane Gnoukouri, who has joined Udinese on loan, is told that he can't play for at least three months after medical tests identify a problem with his heart.
SPAIN: Alaves reach the Spanish Cup Final for the first time in their 96-year history with a 1-0 victory over Celta Vigo.

Thursday February 9

AUSTRALIA: Sydney extend their unbeaten run in the A-League to 20 games with a 3-1 win over Wellington Phoenix.
SPAIN: Athletic Bilbao's 22-year-old defender Yeray Alvarez signs a new deal with the club six weeks after undergoing cancer surgery.

Friday February 10

ANGOLA: At least 17 people are killed before the opening game of the new Girabola season when fans in the northern city of Uige storm the gates of the Estadio 4 de Janeiro before Santa Rita de Cassia's home game against Recreativo do Libolo.
FRANCE: Edinson Cavani scores twice to make it nine goals in his last six games as Paris Saint-Germain win 3-0 at Bordeaux.
SCOTLAND: Rangers say they have accepted the resignation of manager Mark Warburton and replaced him with under-20's coach Graeme Murty, although Warburton denies having stood down.

Saturday February 11

ENGLAND: Tottenham Hotspur lose in the Premier League for only the third time this term, going down 2-0 away to Liverpool.
FRANCE: Eighteen-year-old Kylian Mbappe scores his second senior hat-trick as Monaco beat Metz 5-0 to stay top of Ligue 1.
GERMANY: Bottom of the league Darmstadt beat Borussia Dortmund 2-1. Manuel Neuer keeps his 100th Bundesliga clean sheet for Bayern Munich in a 2-0 win at Ingolstadt. Hamburg move out of the relegation places with a 3-0 victory away to second-place RB Leipzig.
ITALY: Home supporters smash the windows of a car carrying Verona's former Italy striker Luca Toni and his club's president Maurizio Setti to their Serie B game at Avellino.
SPAIN: Sergio Ramos makes his 500th appearance for Real Madrid as they win 3-1 at Osasuna.
URUGUAY: A 2-1 victory over hosts Ecuador sees Uruguay win the South American Youth Championship for ➤

Republic of Ireland

SEAN CREEDON

Going for Rovers' record

Dundalk plot fourth title in a row

Dundalk did Ireland proud last season with their exploits in Europe and they now have their sights set on equalling Shamrock Rovers' record of four league titles in a row.

Of last term's championship-winning side, Daryl Horgan and Andy Boyle have gone to Preston North End, while Ronan Finn and Michael O'Connor joined Shamrock Rovers. But it hasn't all been one-way traffic and manager Stephen Kenny has been busy in the transfer market. New recruits include Michael Duffy from Celtic, Jamie McGrath and Sean Hoare from St Patrick's Athletic, Danish-born Niclas Vemmelund from Derry City and former Chelsea and Irish under-21 international Conor Clifford, who arrives from Boreham Wood.

Kenny's side will be helped by a new playing surface at Oriel Park, although once again it will be a 3G surface. In the long term, Dundalk's plan is to revert to grass and give the stadium a much needed upgrade.

Cork City finished second last time out and manager John Caulfield sees no reasons why his side can't go one better this year, pointing out: "We played Dundalk five times last season in all competitions and won four of the games.

"Admittedly, Dundalk did win the crucial league meeting between the clubs in October, and that win helped them pull away from us at the end of the season. However, we spoiled their hopes of a league-cup double when beating them in the FAI Cup Final."

Caulfield, who took charge of Cork in November 2013, adds: "In my first season we probably over achieved and the league title was decided in the last game of the season when Dundalk beat us at Oriel. They pipped us again in 2015, but last year for the first time I felt we were evenly matched."

And the Cork boss can't wait for the new campaign to get under way, stating: "I am happy enough with the squad I have now and I feel we now have a group well able to compete with Dundalk and the other clubs.

"We got French-born Achille Campion from Sligo Rovers and I think he is the kind of striker well suited to the league. Jimmy Keohane also joined us from Sligo Rovers, plus Conor McCormack has joined us from Derry City. Former Wexford Youths player Ryan Delaney has come on loan from Burton Albion until the end of the season."

Sean Maguire, who made the switch from Dundalk to Cork last season and ended up the league's top scorer with 18 goals, has agreed a new deal. Also staying on at Turner's

Triumph...Cup winners Cork City (in green) defeat Dundalk

> "It's difficult for a provincial club to win the league as there is a lot of travelling involved"
> Cork City manager John Caulfield

Determined...John Caulfield believes Cork can rival champions Dundalk for the title

Preview

Cross is Mark McNulty, who was named goalkeeper of the year by Irish soccer writers last season.

"It's difficult for a provincial club to win the league as there is a lot of travelling involved and then if you have a good run in Europe the games build up," says Caulfield. "We had a decent run in the Europa League last season, beating Linfield and Hacken, before going out to Belgian side Genk.

"Technically, Dundalk is also a provincial club, but they are very close to Dublin, whereas last season our nearest home game was Shamrock Rovers, who are based in south Dublin."

Apart from Dundalk, Caulfield believes there are a couple of other sides that could challenge for the title, suggesting: "Shamrock Rovers have had a cash injection and brought in some good players and they could be a threat.

"But if you are looking for a dark horse it may be Bray Wanderers. Under Harry Kenny, Bray had a great run in the second half of last season."

The top flight will be reduced to 10 teams in 2018, so three clubs will be relegated this year, with just one promoted from the second tier. WS

Challenge...Bray and Shamrock (in hoops)

LEAGUE OF IRELAND: 2017

1 Bohemians (Dublin)
Shamrock Rovers
St Patrick's Athletic
2 Bray Wanderers
3 Cork City
4 Derry City (Buncrana)
5 Drogheda United
6 Dundalk
7 Finn Harps (Ballybofey)
8 Galway United
9 Limerick
10 Sligo Rovers

KEY DATES
Season starts: February 24, 2017
Season ends: October 27, 2017

➤ an eighth time. They also qualify for the summer's Under-20 World Cup finals, along with Argentina, Ecuador and Venezuela.

Sunday February 12

BRAZIL: Botafogo supporter Diego Silva dos Santos, 28, is shot dead outside the club's Estadio Olimpico Nilton Santos as rival fans clash before a game against Flamengo.
REUNION: A last-minute penalty from 41-year-old Willy Visnelda gives Saint-Louisienne a shock 2-1 win over Bidvest Wits of South Africa in the first leg of their CAF Champions League preliminary-round tie.
SCOTLAND: Scottish Cup holders Hibernian draw 0-0 at city rivals Hearts in the fifth round.
SPAIN: Atletico Madrid score twice in the last five minutes to come from behind and beat Celta Vigo 3-2.

Monday February 13

ENGLAND: Manchester City win 2-0 away to Bournemouth and go second in the Premier League, eight points behind Chelsea, but their 19-year-old Brazilian striker Gabriel Jesus suffers a broken metatarsal in his right foot.
GERMANY: The DFB rules the south stand of Borussia Dortmund's Signal Iduna Park – the famous "Yellow Wall" – will be closed for the club's next home game after defamatory banners were displayed at the home fixture against RB Leipzig.
ICELAND: Former Tottenham Hotspur and Bolton Wanderers defender Gudni Bergsson, who won 80 caps for his country, is elected president of the Football Association of Iceland.

Tuesday February 14

FRANCE: Angel Di Maria and Edinson Cavani celebrate their 29th and 30th birthdays respectively with two goals and a goal apiece as Paris Saint-Germain beat Barcelona 4-0 in the Champions League.
GERMANY: Jan-Christian Dreesen, the executive vice-chairman of Bayern Munich, tells *Sport Bild* that Manchester United made an offer in excess of €100m for Thomas Muller.
ITALY: Twenty-four hours after being given a vote of confidence, Massimo Oddo is sacked by Pescara, who are bottom of Serie A.
PORTUGAL: Luisao, who turned 36 on Monday, plays his 500th game for Benfica as they win 1-0 at home to Borussia Dortmund.
TURKEY: Coach Jan Olde Riekerink leaves Galatasaray with the club five points adrift of leaders Besiktas after 20 matches. WS

Internationals

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS

Played in Gabon

Group A

Jan14 - Libreville
Gabon 1 (Aubameyang 53)
Guinea-Bissau 1 (Juary 90+1)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Grisha (Egy)
Gabon: Ovono - Palun, Appindangoye, Ecuele Manga, Obiang, Tandjigora (Biyogo Poko 84), Ndong, Evouna (Angoue 89), Lemina (Kanga 74), Bouanga, Aubameyang.
Guinea-Bissau: Jonas - Tomas Dabo, Rudinilson, Juary, A Soares, Nani, Francisco Junior (Aldair 74), Toni Silva, Zezinho, Joao Mario (Piqueti 61), Abel Camara (F Mendy 66).

Jan14 - Libreville
Burkina Faso 1 (Dayo 75)
Cameroon 1 (Moukandjo 35)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Malo, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly, Kabore, Abdou Traore (Zongo 74), Nakoulma, Pitroipa (Bance 86), Alain Traore, B Traore (Diawara 61).
Cameroon: Ondoa - Mabouka, Ngadeu, Teikeu, Oyongo, N'Jie (Salli 77), Mandjeck, Siani, Bassogog (Toko Ekambi 84), Moukandjo, Zoua.

Jan18 - Libreville
Gabon 1 (Aubameyang pen 38)
Burkina Faso 1 (Nakoulma 23)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)
Gabon: Ovono - Palun, Appindangoye, Ecuele Manga, Obiang (Ze Ondo 34), Biyogo Poko (Angoue 75), Tandjigora (Ngouali 66), Ndong, Bouanga, Evouna, Aubameyang.
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Malo, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly, Kabore, Abdou Traore, Zongo (B Traore 54), Pitroipa (Nakoulma 11), Alain Traore (Sare 77), Diawara.

Jan18 - Libreville
Cameroon 2 (Siani 61, Ngadeu 79)
Guinea-Bissau 1 (Piqueti 13)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Essrayri (Tun)
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Teikeu, Ngadeu, Oyongo, Mandjeck (N'Koulou 65), Siani, Bassogog, Moukandjo, N'Jie (Toko Ekambi 46), Aboubakar (Ndip Tambe 65).
Guinea-Bissau: Jonas - Tomas Dabo, Rudinilson, Juary, Mamadu Cande, Nani, Zezinho, Francisco Junior, Tony Silva (Sami 67), F Mendy (Abel Camara 81), Piqueti (I Camara 50).

Jan 22 - Libreville
Cameroon 0
Gabon 0
Ref: Bennett (SAf)
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Teikeu, N'Koulou, Oyongo, Siani, Ngadeu, Moukandjo, Bassogog (Aboubakar 83), Ndip Tambe (Toko Ekambi 83), Salli (Zoua 76).
Gabon: Ovono - Palun (Angoue 73), Appindangoye, Ecuele Manga, Ze Ondo (Wachter 57), Biyogo Poko, Ndong, Ngouali, Bouanga, Aubameyang, Evouna (Mbingui 78).

Jan 22 - Franceville
Guinea-Bissau 0
Burkina Faso 2 (Rudinilson og 12, B Traore 58)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Tessema Weyesa (Eth)
Guinea-Bissau: Jonas - Tomas Dabo, Rudinilson, Juary, Mamadu Cande, Nani (Sana 63), Zezinho, Francisco Junior (Aldair 76), Toni Silva, F Mendy, Piqueti (Abel Camara 65).
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Yago, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly, Kabore, Abdou Traore, B Traore (Sare 78), Alain Traore (Toure 67), Nakoulma, Bance (Bayala 59).

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS - GROUP A

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina F (Q)	3	1	2	0	4	2	5
Cameroon (Q)	3	1	2	0	3	2	5
Gabon	3	0	3	0	2	2	3
G-Bissau	3	0	1	2	2	5	1

Group B

Jan15 - Franceville
Algeria 2 (Mahrez 12, 82)
Zimbabwe 2 (Mahachi 17, Mushekwi pen 29)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Tessema Weyesa (Eth)
Algeria: M'Bolhi - Belkhiter (Meftah 46), Mandi, Bensebaini, Ghoulam, Guedioura, Bentaleb, Mahrez, Brahimi, Soudani (Ghezzal 78), Slimani.
Zimbabwe: Mkuruva - Zvirekwi, Muroiwa, Nhamoinesu, Bhasera, Mahachi, Katsande, Phiri, Musona (M Rusike 12), Billiat, Mushekwi (Malajila 78).

Jan15 - Franceville
Tunisia 0
Senegal 2 (Mane pen 10, Mbodj 30)
HT: 0-2. **Ref:** Alioum (Cam)
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi - Nagguez, Ben Youssef, Abdennour, Maaloul, Azouni (Khazri 46), Sassi, Lahmar, Sliti, Akaichi (Khenissi 64), Msakni.
Senegal: Diallo - Gassama, Mbodj, Koulibaly, M'Bengue, P A N'Diaye (Saivet 72), Gueye, Kouyate (Diop 88), Keita (Sarr 62), Diouf, Mane.

Jan19 - Franceville
Algeria 1 (Hanni 90+2)
Tunisia 2 (Mandi og 50, Sliti pen 66)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Camille (Sey)
Algeria: Asselah - Meftah, Bensebaini, Mandi, Ghoulam, Guedioura (Abeid 90+3), Brahimi (Hanni 74), Mahrez, Bentaleb, Ghezzal (Bounedjah 69), Slimani.
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi (Jridi 88) - Nagguez, Ben Youssef, Abdennour, Maaloul, Sassi, Khazri (Yacoubi 73), Sliti, Ben Amor, Msakni, Akaichi (Khenissi 78).

Jan19 - Franceville
Senegal 2 (Mane 9, Saivet 14)
Zimbabwe 0
HT: 2-0. **Ref:** Jiyed (Mor)
Senegal: Diallo - Gassama, Koulibaly, Mbodj, M'Bengue, Gueye, Kouyate (N'Doye 85), Keita, Saivet, Mane (Sarr 90+1), Diouf (Sow 63).
Zimbabwe: Mkuruva - Zvirekwi, Muroiwa, Nhamoinesu, Bhasera, Nakamba, Katsande, Mahachi (Ndoro 46), Billiat, M Rusike (E Rusike 46), Mushekwi (Malajila 83).

Jan 23 - Franceville
Senegal 2 (Diop 44, Sow 54)
Algeria 2 (Slimani 10, 52)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Bondo (Bot)
Senegal: K N'Diaye - Toure, Mbodj (Diedhiou 70), N'Doye, Ciss, P A N'Diaye (Gueye 79), Diame, Diop, Sarr, Sow, Konate (Keita 90+4).
Algeria: Asselah - Meftah, Mandi, Cadamuro, Ghoulam, Guedioura, Hanni (Ghezzal 83), Bentaleb, Mahrez, Slimani (Bounedjah 80), Brahimi.

Jan 23 - Libreville
Zimbabwe 2 (Musona 43, Ndoro 58)
Tunisia 4 (Sliti 10, Msakni 22, Khenissi 36, Khazri pen 45)
HT: 1-4. **Ref:** Dembele (IvC)
Zimbabwe: Mkuruva - Zvirekwi, Muroiwa, Nhamoinesu, Bhasera, Phiri (Ndoro 46), Katsande, Billiat, Nakamba, Musona (Mahachi 89), Mushekwi.
Tunisia: Jridi - Nagguez, Ben Youssef, Abdennour, Maaloul, Ben Amor, Sassi, Khenissi, Khazri (Lahmar 63), Sliti (Azouni 83), Msakni (Khalifa 78).

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS - GROUP B

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Senegal (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	2	7
Tunisia (Q)	3	2	0	1	6	5	6
Algeria	3	0	2	1	5	6	2
Zimbabwe	3	0	1	2	4	8	1

Group C

Jan16 - Oyem
Ivory Coast 0
Togo 0
Ref: Otogo-Castane (Gab)
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bailly, Kanon, Traore, Kessie, Serey Die, Seri (Doukoure 66), Zaha (Bony 70), Kodjia (Gradel 83), Kalou.
Togo: Agassa - Gakpe, Romao, Ouro-Akoriko, Djene, Dossevi (Agbegniadan 88), Ayite, Atakora, Bebou, Adebayor (Boukari 89), Laba (Akakpo 83).

Jan16 - Oyem
DR Congo 1 (Kabananga 55)
Morocco 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Nampiandraza (Mad)
DR Congo: Matampi - Mpeko, Tisserand, Zakuani, N'Sakala (Lomalisa 65), Mbemba, Bokadi, Mulumba, Kabananga (Maghoma 72), Bakambu (Mbokani 77), Mubele.
Sent off: Lomalisa 81.
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Da Costa, Mendyl, El Ahmadi, Carcela (El Arabi 79), Boussoufa, Saiss (Fajr 73), El Kaddouri (En-Nesyri 61), Bouhaddouz.

Jan 20 - Oyem
Ivory Coast 2 (Bony 26, Serey Die 67)
DR Congo 2 (Kebano 10, Kabananga 28)
HT: 1-2. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bailly, Kanon, Traore (Deli 46), Doukoure, Serey Die, Kessie, Zaha, Bony, Gradel (Kalou 77).
DR Congo: Matampi - Bokadi, Mpeko, Ikoko (Mulumbu 72), Tisserand, Maghoma (Mulumba 72), Kebano, Mbemba, Mubele, Mbokani, Kabananga (Bolingi 79).

Jan 20 - Oyem
Morocco 3 (Bouhaddouz 14, Saiss 21, En-Nesyri 72)
Togo 1 (Dossevi 5)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Keita (Mli)
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Da Costa, Saiss, Mendyl, El Ahmadi, Boussoufa, El Kaddouri (En-Nesyri 60), Fajr (Ait Bennasser 81), Bouhaddouz (Alioui 90).
Togo: Agassa - Gakpe, Romao, Ouro-Akoriko, Djene, Dossevi (Segbefia 84), Atakora (Agbegniadan 89), Ayite, Bebou, Laba (Boukari 73), Adebayor.

Jan 24 - Oyem
Morocco 1 (Alioui 64)
Ivory Coast 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Alioum (Cam)
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Benatia, Da Costa, Mendyl, El Ahmadi, Saiss, Boussoufa, Fajr (Obbadi 83), En-Nesyri, Bouhaddouz (Alioui 42; Boutaib 90+2).
Ivory Coast: Gbohouo - Aurier, Bailly, Deli, Kanon, Doukoure (Seri 52), Serey Die, Kessie (Gradel 85), Zaha (Kodjia 75), Bony, Kalou.

Jan 24 - Port-Gentil
Togo 1 (Laba 69)
DR Congo 3 (Kabananga 29, Mubele 54, M'Poku 80)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)
Togo: Tchagouni (Mensah 24) - Djene, Akakpo, Ouro-Akoriko, Gakpe, Atakora, Ayite, Dossevi (Laba 67), Boukari (Romao 78), Bebou, Adebayor.
DR Congo: Matampi - Mpeko, Bokadi, Tisserand, Lomalisa, Mulumbu, Mbemba, Kebano (M'Poku 60), Mubele (Botaka 68), Kabananga (Bokila 83), Bolingi.

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS - GROUP C

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo (Q)	3	2	1	0	6	3	7
Morocco (Q)	3	2	0	1	4	2	6
Ivory Coast	3	0	2	1	2	3	2
Togo	3	0	1	2	2	6	1

Group D

Jan17 - Port-Gentil
Ghana 1 (A Ayew pen 32)
Uganda 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Bondo (Bot)
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Amartey, Boye, Rahman (Acheampong 39), A Ayew, Partey, Wakaso, Atsu, Gyan (Agyemang-Badu 73), J Ayew (Acquah 86).
Uganda: Onyango - Iguma, Wasswa, Isinde (Sserunkuma 70), Ochaya, G Kizito, Luwagga (Shaban 57), Azira (Oloya 46), Mawejje, Miya, Massa.

Jan17 - Port-Gentil
Mali 0
Egypt 0
Ref: Bennett (SAf)
Mali: Sissoko - O Coulibaly, Wague, S Coulibaly, H Traore, Mamoutou N'Diaye, Sylla, L Coulibaly (Sow 72), S Yatabare (Bissouma 65), Marega, Sako.
Egypt: El Shenawy (El Hadary 25) - Fathy, Hegazy, Gabr, Abdel-Shafy, Hamed, Elneny, M Salah (Sobhi 70), El Said, Trezeguet, Mohsen (Koka 76).

Jan 21 - Port-Gentil
Ghana 1 (Gyan 21)
Mali 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Abid Charef (Alg)
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Amartey, Boye, Acheampong, Atsu, Partey, Wakaso, A Ayew, J Ayew (Acquah 90), Gyan (Agyemang-Badu 82).
Mali: Sissoko - O Coulibaly, Wague, S Coulibaly, H Traore, Mamoutou N'Diaye, Sylla, S Yatabare (Bissouma 46), M Yatabare (Doumbia 63), Sako, Marega (K Coulibaly 79).

Jan 21 - Port-Gentil
Egypt 1 (El Said 89)
Uganda 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)
Egypt: El Hadary - Fathy, Gabr, Hegazy, Abdel-Shafy, Elneny, Hamed (El Said 59), Trezeguet (Kahraba 80), M Salah, Sobhi (Warda 66), Mohsen.
Uganda: Onyango - Iguma (Oloya 90+2), Juuko, Wasswa, Walusimbi, G Kizito, Aucho, Ochaya, Miya (Wadada 81), Mawejje, Massa (Shaban 66).

Jan 25 - Port-Gentil
Egypt 1 (M Salah 11)
Ghana 0
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)
Egypt: El Hadary - Elmohamady, Hegazy, Gabr, Fathy, Hamed, Elneny, M Salah, El Said (Warda 76), Trezeguet, Mohsen (Kahraba 69).
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Amartey, Boye, Mensah, Agyemang-Badu (Wakaso 80), Tetteh (Tekpetey 73), Yiadom, Atsu, Gyan (J Ayew 41), A Ayew.

Jan 25 - Oyem
Uganda 1 (Miya 70)
Mali 1 (Bissouma 73)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lemghaifry (Mra)
Uganda: Odongkara - Iguma, Juuko, Wasswa, Walusimbi, Oloya (Mawejje 60), G Kizito, Aucho (Azira 90+2), Ochaya, Miya, Luwagga (Massa 78).
Mali: Sissoko - O Coulibaly, Wague, Mahamadou N'Diaye, H Traore, Mamoutou N'Diaye, Sylla, Bissouma, L Coulibaly (K Coulibaly 54), Doumbia, Marega (M Yatabare 78).

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP FINALS - GROUP D

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt (Q)	3	2	1	0	2	0	7
Ghana (Q)	3	2	0	1	2	1	6
Mali	3	0	2	1	1	2	2
Uganda	3	0	1	2	1	3	1

● *The top 2 in each group qualified for the quarter-finals*

Quarter-finals

Jan 28 - Libreville
Burkina Faso 2 (Bance 81, Nakoulma 85)
Tunisia 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Bennett (SAf)
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Yago, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly, Kabore, Abdou Traore, Toure (Sare 87), B Traore (Alain Traore 90+2), Nakoulma, Bayala (Bance 77).
Tunisia: A Mathlouthi - Nagguez, Ben Youssef, Yacoubi, Abdennour, Ben Amor, Sassi (Akaichi 85), Khazri (Lahmar 63), Sliti, Msakni, Khenissi (Khalifa 85).

Jan 28 - Franceville
Senegal 0
Cameroon 0
Aet. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Cameroon 5-4 on pens
Senegal: Diallo - Gassama, Mbodj, Koulibaly, M'Bengue (Ciss 86), Gueye, Saivet, Kouyate (P A N'Diaye 109), Keita, Diouf (Sow 64), Mane.
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Teikeu, Ngadeu, Oyongo, Siani, Moukandjo, Djoum (Mandjeck 102), Bassogog, Ndip Tambe (Aboubakar 102), Toko Ekambi (Zoua 46).
Penalty shoot-out: (Senegal 1st) Koulibaly + Moukandjo + (1-1); Mbodj + Oyongo + (2-2); Sow + Teikeu + (3-3); Saivet + Zoua + (4-4); Mane – Aboubakar + (4-5).

Jan 29 - Oyem
DR Congo 1 (M'Poku 68)
Ghana 2 (J Ayew 63, A Ayew pen 78)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Camille (Sey)
DR Congo: Matampi - Mpeko, Bokadi, Tisserand, Lomalisa, Mulumba (Bolingi 89), M'Poku (Bakambu 83), Mbemba, Mubele (Bokila 83), Mbokani, Kabananga.
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Amartey, Boye, Acheampong, Acquah, Wakaso, Partey, Atsu, J Ayew, A Ayew.

Jan 29 - Port-Gentil
Egypt 1 (Kahraba 88)
Morocco 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Otogo-Castane (Gab)
Egypt: El Hadary - Elmohamady, Gabr, Hegazy, Hafez (Kahraba 63), Hamed (Samir 90+3), Fathy, El Said, M Salah, Mohsen (Koka 43), Trezeguet.
Morocco: El Kajoui - Dirar, Da Costa, Benatia, Mendyl, Boussoufa, Saiss (Alioui 90+2), El Ahmadi, Fajr, Bouhaddouz (El Kaddouri 79), En-Nesyri.

Semi-finals

Feb1 - Libreville
Burkina Faso 1 (Bance 73)
Egypt 1 (M Salah 66)
Aet. **HT:** 0-0. **90mins:** 1-1. **Ref:** Diedhiou (Sen)
Egypt 4-3 on pens
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Yago, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly, Abdou Traore (Diawara 80), Toure, Kabore, B Traore, Bance (Alain Traore 102), Nakoulma.
Egypt: El Hadary - Elmohamady (Gaber 106), Hegazy, Gabr, Fathy, Hamed, I Salah, M Salah, El Said, Trezeguet (Sobhi 85), Kahraba (Warda 74).
Penalty shoot-out: (Egypt 1st)
El Said – Alain Traore + (0-1); Sobhi + Diawara + (1-2); Hegazy + Yago + (2-3); M Salah + Koffi – (3-3); Warda + B Traore – (4-3).

Feb 2 - Franceville
Cameroon 2 (Ngadeu 72, Bassogog 90+3)
Ghana 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Gassama (Gam)
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Ngadeu, Teikeu, Oyongo, Djoum (Mandjeck 77), Siani, Bassogog, Zoua, Moukandjo, Ndip Tambe (Aboubakar 74).
Ghana: Brimah - Afful, Boye, Amartey, Acheampong, Atsu, Acquah (Gyan 76), Wakaso, Partey (Agyemang-Badu 86), J Ayew, A Ayew.

3rd-place match

Feb 4 - Port-Gentil
Burkina Faso 1 (Alain Traore 89)
Ghana 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Abid Charef (Alg)
Burkina Faso: Koffi - Yago, Dayo, Kone, Coulibaly (Malo 83), Toure, Alain Traore, Kabore (Guira 89), B Traore, Bance (Bayala 73), Nakoulma.
Ghana: R Ofori - Afful, Amartey, Mensah, Yiadom, Agyemang-Badu, Partey, E Ofori, Tekpetey (A Ayew 71), J Ayew (Atsu 75), Tetteh (Gyan 65).

Final

Feb 5 - Libreville
Egypt 1 (Elneny 22)
Cameroon 2 (N'Koulou 60, Aboubakar 89)
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 38,216. **Ref:** Sikazwe (Zam)
Egypt: El Hadary - Elmohamady, Hegazy, Gabr, Fathy, Hamed, Elneny, M Salah, El Said, Trezeguet (Sobhi 66), Warda.
Cameroon: Ondoa - Fai, Ngadeu, Teikeu (N'Koulou 32), Oyongo, Siani, Zoua (Mandjeck 90+4), Djoum, Bassogog, Ndip Tambe (Aboubakar 46), Moukandjo.

COPA CENTROAMERICANA

Played in Panama City, Panama

Jan13
Honduras 2 (Hernandez 23, Andino 69)
Nicaragua 1 (Figueroa og 20)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Montero (CR)
Honduras: L Lopez - Crisanto, Figueroa, Oseguera, Alvarado, Mejia, Salas (Pereira 88), Altamirano (Chirinos 59), Garrido, Hernandez, Reyes (Andino 59).
Nicaragua: Lorente - Quijano, Casco, Copete, Rosas, Cadena (Lazo 74), M Lopez (Coronel 59), Pinel (Garcia 85), Peralta, Barrera, Moreno.

Jan13
Costa Rica 0
El Salvador 0
Ref: Marrufo (USA)
Costa Rica: Pemberton - Acosta, Calvo, Meneses, Miranda, Umana, Angulo, Azofeifa (Guzman 66), Rodriguez (Aguilar 75), Vega (Venegas 57), Ruiz.
El Salvador: Villalobos - Romero, Dominguez, Tamacas, Larin, Renderos, O Ceren (Flores 75), R Menjivar, Mayen (Sosa 67), Zelaya, Bonilla (Herrera 81).

Jan13
Panama 0
Belize 0
Ref: Lopez (Gtm)
Panama: Calderon - Ovalle (Davis 70), Murillo (Arroyo 70), Ariano, Vargas, Buitrago (Taylor 46), Cooper, Barcenas, Quintero, Godoy, Blackburn.
Belize: West - Trapp, Gaynair, Smith, Kuylen, Casey, Polanco (Lennen 72), Mensah (A Makin 79), McCaulay, Salazar (D Makin 89), Jimenez.

Jan15
Belize 0
Costa Rica 3 (Ortiz 25, 65, Venegas 51)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Ward (SKN)
Belize: West - Gaynair, Trapp, Smith, Casey, Kuylen (Clare 60), Polanco (Lennen 59), Mensah (Atkinson 59), Jimenez, McCaulay, Salazar.
Costa Rica: Moreira - Acosta (Umana 46), Ordain, Gutierrez, Vargas, Leal, Aguilar (Torres 62), Guzman, Segura, Ortiz, Venegas (Angulo 69).

Jan15
El Salvador 1 (Zelaya 10)
Honduras 2 (Castillo 62, 90+1)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)
El Salvador: Villalobos - Tamacas, Romero, Dominguez, Larin, O Ceren, R Menjivar (Alas 77), D Ceren, Mayen (Punyed 61), Bonilla (Herrera 45+1), Zelaya. *Sent off: Zelaya 57, Larin 89.*
Honduras: Escober - Puerto, Pereira, Figueroa, Oseguera, A Lopez (Salas 46), Altamirano (Chirinos 72), Claros, Garrido (Canales 66), Castillo, Andino.

Jan15
Panama 2 (Miller 8, Nunez 12)
Nicaragua 1 (Garcia 30)
HT: 2-1. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
Panama: Calderon - Patrick, Cummings, Miller, Davis, Villarreal (Barcenas 60), Henriquez, Gonzalez, Nunez (Quintero 65), Small (Cooper 80), Arroyo.
Nicaragua: D Tellez - Quijano, Casco, Rosas, Copete, Montiel, Peralta, Barrera (Pinel 65), Garcia (Jarquin 82), Cadena (Somarriba 73), Moreno.

Jan17
El Salvador 3 (Mayen 15, Barahona 20, Romero 23)
Belize 1 (McCaulay 43)
HT: 3-1. **Ref:** Moncada (Hnd)
El Salvador: Villalobos - Dominguez (Mancia 42), Romero, Barahona, Tamacas, D Ceren, R Menjivar, Flores (Sosa 71), O Ceren, Mayen (Punyed 66), Bonilla.
Belize: West - Lennen, Gaynair, Smith, Trapp, Atkinson (Polanco 47), Kuylen (Jimenez 49), Casey, D Torres (Thurton 73), Salazar, McCaulay.

Jan17
Costa Rica 0
Nicaragua 0
Ref: Pitti (Pan)
Costa Rica: Carvajal - Acosta, Ordain, Leal, Calvo, Gutierrez (Rodriguez 67), Azofeifa (Aguilar 73), Torres (Ruiz 46), Guzman, Venegas, Ortiz.
Nicaragua: D Tellez - E Tellez, O Lopez, Errington (Casco 71), M Lopez, Somarriba, Coronel, Pinel (Garcia 88), Veliz, Jarquin, Lazo (Cadena 67).

Jan17
Panama 0
Honduras 1 (Hernandez pen 36)
HT: 0-1. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Panama: Calderon - Cummings, Miller, Murillo, Ovalle (Davis 70), Cooper, Quintero, Godoy, Henriquez, Blackburn (Barcenas 81), Taylor (Arroyo 56).
Honduras: Escober - Puerto (Vargas 79), Pereira, Figueroa, Alvarado, Garcia, Morazan, Claros, Canales (Chirinos 72), Andino (Castillo 83), Hernandez.

Jan 20
Nicaragua 3 (Barrera 30, Cadena 84, Garcia 90)
Belize 1 (Smith pen 54)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Aguilar (ESv)
Nicaragua: D Tellez - Quijano, Casco, Copete, M Lopez (Lazo 81), Rosas, Cadena, Pinel (Garcia 59), Peralta (Montiel 46), Barrera, Moreno.
Belize: Orio - Lennen, Clare (Jimenez 36), Smith, Trapp (Pandy 76), Casey, D Torres, A Makin, Polanco, Salazar (Thurton 46), McCaulay.

Jan 20
Honduras 1 (Andino 17)
Costa Rica 1 (Calvo 59)
HT: 1-0. **Ref:** Guerrero (Mex)
Honduras: Escober - Alvarado, Puerto, Garcia (Vargas 66), Figueroa, Pereira, Canales (Chirinos 62), Morazan, Claros, Castillo, Andino (Reyes 80).
Costa Rica: Pemberton - Acosta, Miranda, Calvo, Umana, Meneses, Angulo, Azofeifa, Guzman (Segura 57), Venegas (Ruiz 76), Ortiz (Vega 80).

Jan 20
Panama 1 (Arroyo 82)
El Salvador 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Lopez (Gtm)
Panama: Calderon - Murillo, Cummings, Miller, Davis, Quintero (Nunez 80), Cooper, Henriquez, Barcenas (Villarreal 65), Blackburn, Small (Arroyo 29).
El Salvador: Villalobos - Tamacas, Romero, Dominguez, Larin, O Ceren, R Menjivar, D Ceren, Mayen (Renderos 68), Flores (Sosa 85), Zelaya (Bonilla 75). *Sent off: R Menjivar 28.*

Jan 22
Belize 0
Honduras 1 (Hernandez 56)
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Ward (SKN)
Belize: West - Lennen, Gaynair, Smith, D Makin, Casey, A Makin (Mensah 54), Polanco (Salazar 62), L Torres (Davis 55), McCaulay, Thurton.
Honduras: Escober - Crisanto, Vargas, Pereira, Oseguera, Garrido, Mejia, Salas (Reyes 80), Altamirano (Andino 61), Hernandez, Canales (Chirinos 66).

Jan 22
El Salvador 1 (Herrera 54)
Nicaragua 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Pitti (Pan)
El Salvador: Villalobos - Tamacas, Mancia, Dominguez, Larin, O Ceren, Alas (Herrera 46), D Ceren, Mayen, Flores (Barahona 63), Zelaya (Renderos 73).
Nicaragua: D Tellez - Quijano, E Tellez (Somarriba 85), Rosas, Copete, Montiel (Lazo 78), M Lopez, Barrera, Garcia (Pinel 76), Cadena, Moreno.

Jan 22
Panama 1 (Cooper 67)
Costa Rica 0
HT: 0-0. **Ref:** Moncada (Hnd)
Panama: Calderon - Cummings, Vargas (Patrick 51), Murillo, Ovalle, Gonzalez (Barcenas 88), Nunez, Buitrago (Godoy 82), Cooper, Henriquez, Arroyo.
Costa Rica: Carvajal - Miranda (Ruiz 77), Umana, Acosta, Calvo, Meneses, Segura (Aguilar 74), Vega (Rodriguez 62), Azofeifa, Angulo, Ortiz.

COPA CENTROAMERICANA – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Honduras (C)	5	4	1	0	7	3	13
Panama	5	3	1	1	4	2	10
El Salvador	5	2	1	2	5	4	7
Costa Rica	5	1	3	1	4	2	6
Nicaragua	5	1	1	3	5	6	4
Belize	5	0	1	4	2	10	1

● *This tournament doubled as the Central America zone qualification group for the 2017 CONCACAF Gold Cup. The top 4 have qualified directly for the Gold Cup finals; the 5th-placed country, Nicaragua, will meet Haiti - the Caribbean qualifying section's 5th-placed country - in a play-off for a place in the Gold Cup finals*

FRIENDLIES

Tuesday, January 17

Jan17 - Doha
Qatar 1 (Soria 3)
Moldova 1 (Cojocari 24)
HT: 1-1. **Ref:** Al Yaqoubi (Oma)
Qatar: Al Sheeb (Barry 46) - Y Abubakar (Fayez 61), Kasola (Musa 46), Assadalla (Khalfan 68), Al Hajri (Ismail 61), I Majid, Pedro Miguel, Khoukhi (Boudiaf 61), Luiz Martin (El Sayed 75), Ali (Al Harazi 62), Soria (A Majid 79).
Moldova: Koselev (Pascenco 46) - Golovatenco, Cojocari, Dedov (Andronic 85), Ginsari, Graur (Antoniuc 56), Bordian (Cascaval 74), Bolohan, Ivanov (Jardan 46), Mihaliov (Platica 75), Bugaiov (Zabun 56).

Sunday, January 22

Jan 22 - Hamilton
Bermuda 2 (Harvey 11, L Simmons 54)
Canada 4 (Osorio 21, Ricketts 23, Chapman 76, Jackson-Hamel 85)
HT: 1-2. **Att:** 1,814. **Ref:** Elfath (USA)
Bermuda: Hill (Daniels 78) - Harvey, Leverock (Sampson 63), W White (Bowen 78), R Lee, Clemons, Z White, Elkinson (Lowe 56), L Simmons (Hollis 56), Lambe, Bascome (Bean 63).
Canada: Irving (Melvin 46; Tissot 55) - Attakora, Jakovic (Lefevre 46), Straith[1], De Jong, McKendry (Chapman 46), Jackson-Hamel, Johnson (Bekker 46), Osorio, Fisk (Bustos 46), Ricketts.
[1]Straith went in goal after Melvin had to be substituted because of injury

Monday, January 23

Jan 23 - Dubai, UAE
Uzbekistan 2 (Shomurodov 45, 78)
Georgia 2 (Shonia 69, S Lobzhanidze 77)
HT: 1-0
Uzbekistan: Lobanov - Tukhtakhodjaev, Sokhibov, Khashimov, Iskanderov (Ashurmatov 90), Andreev, A Akhmedov, Shukurov (Kutiboev 80), Shomurodov, Sergeev, Bikmaev (Masharipov 57). *Sent off: A Akhmedov 89.*
Georgia: Kvaskhvadze - Shergelashvili (Tabidze 89), Rekhviashvili, U Lobzhanidze, Shonia (Mamasakhlisi 83), S Lobzhanidze (Kharaishvili 82), Kiteishvili (Papunashvili 89), Zivzivadze, Tugushi (Dvalishvili 70), Khocholava, Arabuli (Parunashvili 57).

Wednesday, January 25

Jan 25 - Rio deJaneiro
Brazil 1 (Dudu 46)
Colombia 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 18,695. **Ref:** Balino (Arg)
Brazil: Weverton - Fagner, Pedro Geromel, Rodrigo Caio, Fabio Santos (Jorge 46), Willian Arao (Rodriguinho 46), Walace, Lucas Lima (Gustavo Scarpa 68), Dudu (Camilo 78), Robinho (Diego 46), Diego Souza (Luan 62).
Colombia: Gonzalez - Bocanegra, F Aguilar, Tesillo, Diaz (L Balanta 61), A Aguilar (Cuellar 68), Uribe, M Torres (Montoya 46), Copete (Hernandez 61), Borja (Rangel 68), Gutierrez (Berrio 46).

Jan 25 - Dubai, UAE
Jordan 1 (Al Dardour 45)
Georgia 0
HT: 1-0
Jordan: Shafi - Al Dmeiri, Al Zawahreh, Khattab, Yasser Al Rawashdeh, Ayed (Abu Hudaib 89), Abdelrahman, Al Taamari (Thalji 69), Abu Amarah (Yousef Al Rawashdeh 61), Faisal (Al Bawab 79), Al Dardour (Samir 70).
Georgia: Migineishvili - U Lobzhanidze (Tornike Grigalashvili 63), Tabidze, Khocholava, S Lobzhanidze (Kimadze 79), Dvalishvili, Zivzivadze (Arabuli 46), Kiteishvili, Tugushi (Mamasakhlisi 82), Shergelashvili (Ganugrava 88), Shonia (Kharaishvili 85).

Sunday, January 29

Jan 29 - San Diego
United States 0
Serbia 0
Att: 20,079. **Ref:** Morrison (Jam)
United States: Rimando - Zusi, Birnbaum, Marshall, Garza (Villafana 69), Bradley, Jones (Lletget 46), Bedoya (Pontius 65), Kljestan (Feilhaber 77), Nagbe (Agudelo 87), Altidore (Morris 74).
Serbia: Manojlovic - Panic, Maras, Calasan (Simonovic 55), Cirkovic, Gobeljic (Klisura 84), Djokic (Jevtovic 77), Palocevic (Mrkic 64), Miletic, Plavsic (L Jovanovic 81), S Jovanovic (Alivodic 63).

Friday, February 3

Feb 3 - Chattanooga
United States 1 (Morris 59)
Jamaica 0
HT: 0-0. **Att:** 17,903. **Ref:** Perea (Pan)
United States: Robles (Bingham 46) - Zusi (Evans 68), Birnbaum, Zimmerman, Villafana (Beasley 86), McCarty (Nagbe 63), Pontius (Bedoya 74), Feilhaber (Bradley 62), Lletget, Morris, Agudelo.
Jamaica: Blake (Thompson 46) - Lowe, Powell, Campbell (Richie 61), Fisher, Grandison (Harriott 78), R Williams (Fletcher 83), Burke (Nicholson 83), Binns, Watson, O Gordon (Holness 56).

Wednesday, February 8

Feb 8 - Las Vegas, USA
Mexico 1 (Pulido 21)
Iceland 0
HT: 1-0. **Att:** 30,617. **Ref:** Marrufo (USA)
Mexico: Talavera - Araujo, Marquez (Ayala 53), Alanis, Damm (Montes 66), Molina (Alvarez 60), Pineda, Gallardo (Reyes 46), Lozano, Pulido (E Hernandez 76), G Dos Santos (Lopez 46).
Iceland: Schram - V Jonsson (Arnarson 86), O Omarsson, Jonasson, B Bodvarsson (K Jonsson 78), A Sigurdarson (Steindorsson 78), K Sigurdsson (Haraldsson 67), Vidarsson, Larusson, Thrandarson (A Vilhjalmsson 78), Kristjan Finnbogason (O Sigurjonsson 54).

2018 WORLD CUP QUALIFIERS

Current standings

AFRICA section

● *5 finals places available*

3rd round

Group A

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
DR Congo	2	2	0	0	6	1	6
Tunisia	2	2	0	0	3	0	6
Guinea	2	0	0	2	1	4	0
Libya	2	0	0	2	0	5	0

Group B

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Nigeria	2	2	0	0	5	2	6
Cameroon	2	0	2	0	2	2	2
Zambia	2	0	1	1	2	3	1
Algeria	2	0	1	1	2	4	1

Group C

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Ivory Coast	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
Gabon	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Morocco	2	0	2	0	0	0	2
Mali	2	0	1	1	1	3	1

Group D

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Burkina Faso	2	1	1	0	3	1	4
South Africa	2	1	1	0	3	2	4
Senegal	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Cape Verde Is	2	0	0	2	0	4	0

Group E

WC QUALS – AFRICA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Egypt	2	2	0	0	4	1	6
Uganda	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Ghana	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Congo	2	0	0	2	1	3	0

Each team will play 6 games (3x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Aug 28, Sep 2, Oct 2, Nov 6, 2017

● *The 5 group winners will qualify for the finals*

ASIA section

● *4.5 finals places available*

3rd round

Group A

WC QUALS – ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Iran	5	3	2	0	4	0	11
South Korea	5	3	1	1	8	6	10
Uzbekistan	5	3	0	2	5	3	9
Syria	5	1	2	2	1	2	5
Qatar	5	1	1	3	3	6	4
China	5	0	2	3	2	6	2

Group B

WC QUALS – ASIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Saudi Arabia	5	3	1	1	9	5	10
Japan	5	3	1	1	8	5	10
Australia	5	2	3	0	8	5	9
UAE	5	3	0	2	7	6	9
Iraq	5	1	0	4	6	8	3
Thailand	5	0	1	4	3	12	1

Each team will play10 games (5x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Mar 23, Mar 28, Jun 8-13, Aug 31, Sep 5, 2017

● *The top 2 in both groups will qualify for the finals; the 2 3rd-placed countries will meet in the* **Asia section play-off**, *the winner of which will meet the 4th-placed CONCACAF country in a play-off for a place in the finals*

CONCACAF section

● *3.5 finals places available*

5th round

WC QUALS – CONCACAF – 5TH ROUND	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Costa Rica	2	2	0	0	6	0	6
Mexico	2	1	1	0	2	1	4
Panama	2	1	1	0	1	0	4
Honduras	2	1	0	1	3	2	3
Trinidad & Tob	2	0	0	2	1	5	0
United States	2	0	0	2	1	6	0

Each team will play10 games (5x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Mar 24, Mar 28, Jun 8, Jun11/13, Sep1, Sep 5, Oct 6, Oct10, 2017

● *The top 3 will qualify for the finals; the 4th-placed country will meet the winner of the Asia section play-off in a play-off for a place in the finals*

EUROPE section

● *13 finals places available (excluding the place for hosts* **Russia**, *who qualify automatically)*

Group A

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
France	4	3	1	0	7	2	10
Holland	4	2	1	1	8	4	7
Sweden	4	2	1	1	6	3	7
Bulgaria	4	2	0	2	6	10	6
Belarus	4	0	2	2	2	6	2
Luxembourg	4	0	1	3	5	9	1

Group B

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Switzerland	4	4	0	0	9	3	12
Portugal	4	3	0	1	16	3	9
Hungary	4	2	1	1	8	3	7
Faroe Islands	4	1	1	2	2	8	4
Latvia	4	1	0	3	2	8	3
Andorra	4	0	0	4	1	13	0

Group C

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP C	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Germany	4	4	0	0	16	0	12
N Ireland	4	2	1	1	8	2	7
Azerbaijan	4	2	1	1	2	4	7
Czech Rep	4	1	2	1	2	4	5
Norway	4	1	0	3	5	7	3
San Marino	4	0	0	4	1	17	0

Group D

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP D	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Rep Ireland	4	3	1	0	7	3	10
Serbia	4	2	2	0	9	5	8
Wales	4	1	3	0	8	4	6
Austria	4	1	1	2	6	7	4
Georgia	4	0	2	2	3	5	2
Moldova	4	0	1	3	2	11	1

Group E

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP E	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Poland	4	3	1	0	10	5	10
Montenegro	4	2	1	1	9	4	7
Denmark	4	2	0	2	7	5	6
Romania	4	1	2	1	6	4	5
Armenia	4	1	0	3	4	10	3
Kazakhstan	4	0	2	2	3	11	2

Group F

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP F	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
England	4	3	1	0	6	0	10
Slovenia	4	2	2	0	4	2	8
Slovakia	4	2	0	2	7	2	6
Lithuania	4	1	2	1	5	7	5
Scotland	4	1	1	2	6	8	4
Malta	4	0	0	4	1	10	0

Group G

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP G	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Spain	4	3	1	0	15	1	10
Italy	4	3	1	0	11	4	10
Israel	4	3	0	1	8	5	9
Albania	4	2	0	2	4	6	6
Macedonia	4	0	0	4	4	11	0
Liechtenstein	4	0	0	4	1	16	0

Group H

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP H	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Belgium	4	4	0	0	21	1	12
Greece	4	3	1	0	9	2	10
Bosnia-Herz	4	2	1	1	8	5	7
Cyprus	4	1	0	3	3	8	3
Estonia	4	1	0	3	5	15	3
Gibraltar	4	0	0	4	2	17	0

Group I

WC QUALS – EUROPE – GROUP I	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Croatia	4	3	1	0	10	1	10
Ukraine	4	2	2	0	7	3	8
Iceland	4	2	1	1	6	5	7
Turkey	4	1	2	1	5	5	5
Finland	4	0	1	3	3	6	1
Kosovo	4	0	1	3	1	12	1

Each team will play10 games (5x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Mar 24-26, Jun 9-11, Aug 31-Sep 2, Sep 3-5, Oct 5-7, Oct 8-10, 2017

● *The 9 group winners will qualify for the finals; the 8 runners-up with the best record (against the countries finishing1st, 3rd, 4th & 5th in the respective groups) will be paired in 4 play-offs, the winners of which will also qualify for the finals*

OCEANIA section

● *0.5 finals places available*

3rd round

Group A

WC QUALS – OCEANIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP A	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
New Zealand	2	1	1	0	2	0	4
New Caledonia	2	0	1	1	0	2	1
Fiji	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Group B

WC QUALS – OCEANIA – 3RD ROUND: GROUP B	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Tahiti	2	1	0	1	3	1	3
Solomon Is	2	1	0	1	1	3	3
Papua NG	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Each team will play 4 games (2x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Mar 23/25, Mar 28, Jun 5, Jun13, 2017

● *The 2 group winners will meet in a play-off (the* **Oceania play-off round**), *the winner of which will meet the 5th-placed South American country in a play-off for a place in the finals*

SOUTH AMERICA section

● *4.5 finals places available*

WC QUALS – SOUTH AMERICA	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Brazil	12	8	3	1	28	9	27
Uruguay	12	7	2	3	24	11	23
Ecuador	12	6	2	4	22	16	20
Chile	12	6	2	4	21	17	20
Argentina	12	5	4	3	14	12	19
Colombia	12	5	3	4	15	15	18
Paraguay	12	4	3	5	11	17	15
Peru	12	4	2	6	18	20	14
Bolivia	12	2	1	9	10	31	7
Venezuela	12	1	2	9	14	29	5

Each team will play18 games (9x2)
Remaining matchdays:
Mar 23, Mar 28, Aug 31, Sep 5, Oct 5, Oct10, 2017

● *The top 4 will qualify for the finals; the 5th-placed country will meet the Oceania play-off round winner in a play-off for a place in the finals*

2019 ASIAN CUP QUALIFIERS

3rd round draw

Group A
India, Kyrgyzstan, Macau[1], Myanmar
[1]Replaced Guam, who withdrew from the competition after qualifying for the 3rd round

Group B
Hong Kong, Lebanon, Malaysia, North Korea

Group C
Afghanistan, Cambodia, Jordan, Vietnam

Group D
Bhutan, Maldives, Oman, Palestine

Group E
Bahrain, Singapore, Taiwan, Turkmenistan

Group F
Nepal[2], Philippines, Tajikistan, Yemen
[2]Replaced Kuwait, who were not eligible to continue in the competition as the Kuwait FA has been suspended by FIFA

Matchdays: *2017 - Mar 28, Jun13, Sep 5, Oct10, Nov14; 2018 - Mar 27*

● *The top 2 in each group will qualify for the 24-team finals, which will be played in the United Arab Emirates from Jan 5 to Feb1, 2019. 12 teams have already qualified for the finals: Australia, China, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, South Korea, Syria, Thailand, United Arab Emirates (hosts) and Uzbekistan*

2019 AFRICAN NATIONS CUP QUALS

Preliminary round draw

Comoros v Mauritius; Djibouti v South Sudan; Sao Tome e Principe v Madagascar
1st & 2nd legs - Mar 20-28, 2017

● *The winners enter the group stage*

Group stage draw

Group A
Equatorial Guinea, Senegal, Sudan, *Sao Tome e Principe OR Madagascar*

Group B
Cameroon, Malawi, Morocco, *Comoros OR Mauritius*

Group C
Burundi, Gabon, Mali, *Djibouti OR South Sudan*

Group D
Algeria, Benin, Gambia, Togo

Group E
Libya, Nigeria, Seychelles, South Africa

Group F
Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Sierra Leone

Group G
Congo, DR Congo, Liberia, Zimbabwe

Group H
Central African Republic, Guinea, Ivory Coast, Rwanda

Group I
Angola, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Mauritania

Group J
Egypt, Niger, Swaziland, Tunisia

Group K
Guinea-Bissau, Mozambique, Namibia, Zambia

Group L
Cape Verde Islands, Lesotho, Tanzania, Uganda

Matchdays: *2017 - Jun 5-13; 2018 - Mar19-27, Sep 3-11 (2 games), Oct 8-16, Nov 5-13*

● *The12 group winners and the 3 runners-up with the best record will qualify for the16-team finals. Hosts Cameroon qualify for the finals automatically but have been drawn into qualifying Group B. Should they win this group, the runners-up will qualify automatically for the finals; should Cameroon finish runners-up in the group, only the group winners will qualify for the finals (apart from Cameroon themselves) - i.e. the 3rd-placed country will not be considered for one of the 3 best runners-up places at the finals*

Club football

SOUTH AMERICA

LIBERTADORES CUP

1st qualifying round
1st legs - Jan 23; 2nd legs - Jan 27
Deportivo Capiata (Par) v Deportivo Tachira (Ven) 1-0, 0-0 (agg 1-0); Deportivo Municipal (Per) v Independiente del Valle (Ecu) 0-1, 2-2 (agg 2-3); Universitario de Sucre (Bol) v Montevideo Wanderers (Uru) 3-2, 2-5 (agg 5-7)

2nd qualifying round
1st legs - Jan 31-Feb 2; 2nd legs - Feb 7-9
Atletico Paranaense (Bra) v Millonarios (Col) 1-0, 0-1 (agg 1-1, Atl Paranaense 4-2 on pens); Atletico Tucuman (Arg) v El Nacional (Ecu) 2-2, 1-0 (agg 3-2); Botafogo (Bra) v Colo Colo (Chl) 2-1, 1-1 (agg 3-2); Carabobo (Ven) v Junior (Col) 0-1, 0-3 (agg 0-4); Cerro (Uru) v Union Espanola (Chl) 2-3, 0-2 (agg 2-5); Deportivo Capiata v Universitario (Per) 1-3, 3-0 (agg 4-3); Independiente del Valle v Olimpia (Par) 1-0, 1-3 (agg 2-3); Montevideo Wanderers v The Strongest (Bol) 0-2, 0-4 (agg 0-6)

SUDAMERICANA CUP

1st round draw
Anzoategui (Ven) v Huracan (Arg)
Boston River (Uru) v Comerciantes Unidos (Per)
Cerro Porteno (Par) v Caracas (Ven)
Corinthians (Bra) v Universidad de Chile (Chl)
Cruzeiro (Bra) v Nacional (Par)
Defensa y Justicia (Arg) v Sao Paulo (Bra)
Deportes Tolima (Col) v Bolivar (Bol)
Deportivo Cali (Col) v Sportivo Luqueno (Par)
Estudiantes de Caracas (Ven) v Sol de America (Par)
Everton (Chl) v Patriotas (Col)
Fluminense (Bra) v Liverpool (Uru)
Independiente (Arg) v Alianza Lima (Per)
Juan Aurich (Per) v Arsenal (Arg)
LDU Quito (Ecu) v Defensor Sporting (Uru)
Nacional Potosi (Bol) v Sport Huancayo (Per)
O'Higgins (Chl) v Fuerza Amarilla (Ecu)
Oriente Petrolero (Bol) v Deportivo Cuenca (Ecu)
Palestino (Chl) v Atletico Venezuela (Ven)
Petrolero (Bol) v Universidad Catolica (Ecu)
Ponte Preta (Bra) v Gimnasia La Plata (Arg)
Racing Club (Arg) v Rionegro Aguilas (Col)
Sport Recife (Bra) v Danubio (Uru)
1st legs - Feb 28-Apr 6; 2nd legs - May 9-Jun1

● *The 22 winners qualify for the 2nd round, in which they will be joined by10 teams eliminated from the Libertadores Cup (the 2 losing teams with the best record from the 3rd qualifying round and the 8 teams that finish 3rd in the group stage)*

ASIA

AFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

1st qualifying round
Jan 24: Global (Phi) 2 Tampines Rovers (Sin) 0.

2nd qualifying round
Jan 25: Kitchee (HK) 3 Ha Noi T&T (Vie) 2 (aet).
Jan 31: Al Wehdat (Jor) 2 Bengaluru (Ind) 1; Bangkok United (Tha) 1 Johor Darul Ta'zim (Mly) 1 (aet, Johor Darul Ta'zim 5-4 on pens); Brisbane Roar (Aus) 6 Global 0; Nasaf Qarshi (Uzb) 4 Al Hidd (Bhn) 0; Sukhothai (Tha) 5 Yadanarbon (Mym) 0.

3rd qualifying round
Feb 7: Al Fateh (Sau) 1 Nasaf Qarshi 0; Al Wahda (UAE) 3 Al Wehdat 0; El Jaish (Qat) 0 Bunyodkor (Uzb) 0 (aet, Bunyodkor 3-1 on pens); Esteghlal Tehran (Irn) 0 Al Sadd (Qat) 0 (aet, Esteghlal Tehran 4-3 on pens); Gamba Osaka (Jap) 3 Johor Darul Ta'zim 0; Shanghai SIPG (Chn) 3 Sukhothai 0; Ulsan Hyundai[1] (SKo) 1 Kitchee 1 (aet, Ulsan Hyundai 4-3 on pens).
Feb 8: Shanghai Shenhua (Chn) 0 Brisbane Roar 2.
[1]Replaced compatriot clubJeju United, who were given direct entry to the group stage following the exclusion ofJeonbuk Motors

● *Winning teams have qualified for group stage*

Group stage draw
Group A
Al Ahli (UAE), Al Taawoun (Sau), Esteghlal Tehran, Lokomotiv Tashkent (Uzb)

Group B
Al Fateh, Al Jazira (UAE), Esteghlal Khuzestan (Irn), Lekhwiya (Qat)

Group C
Al Ahli (Sau), Al Ain (UAE), Bunyodkor, Zob Ahan (Irn)

Group D
Al Hilal (Sau), Al Rayyan (Qat), Al Wahda, Persepolis (Irn)

Group E
Brisbane Roar, Kashima Antlers (Jap), Muangthong United (Tha), Ulsan Hyundai

Group F
Seoul (SKo), Shanghai SIPG, Urawa Red Diamonds (Jap), Western Sydney Wanderers (Aus)

Group G
Eastern (HK), Guangzhou Evergrande (Chn), Kawasaki Frontale (Jap), Suwon Bluewings (SKo)

Group H
Adelaide United (Aus), Gamba Osaka, Jeju United[2] (SKo), Jiangsu Suning (Chn)
[2]Jeju United were given direct entry to the group stage – having originally been drawn in the 3rd qualifying round – in place of compatriot club Jeonbuk Motors, who were excluded from the competition after a club scout was found guilty of bribing referees for domestic games in 2013

Matchdays: *Feb 20-22, Feb 27-Mar1, Mar13-15, Apr10-12, Apr 24-26, May 8-10*

● *The top 2 in each group will qualify for the1st knockout round (last16)*

AFC CUP

Preliminary round
1st legs - Jan 31; 2nd legs - Feb 7
Colombo (Sri) v Mohun Bagan (Ind) 1-2, 1-2 (agg 2-4); Dordoi (Kyr) v Balkan (Tkm) 1-1, 2-1 (agg 3-2); Shaheen Asmayee (Afg) v Khosilot (Taj) 0-1, 0-0 (agg 0-1); Thimphu City (Bhu) v Valencia (Mdv) 0-0, 0-3 (agg 0-3)

INDONESIA

2016 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Persipura (C)	34	20	8	6	53	27	68
Arema	34	18	10	6	46	22	64
Madura Utd	34	18	7	9	56	40	61
Sriwijaya	34	15	11	8	62	39	56
Persib	34	15	10	9	45	33	55
PSM	34	16	6	12	52	46	54
Bhayangkara	34	15	9	10	50	34	54
Semen Padang	34	15	7	12	46	34	52
Pusamania	34	14	8	12	62	41	50
Mitra Kukar	34	13	10	11	47	43	49
Perseru	34	13	7	14	38	51	46
Bali United	34	10	10	14	36	52	40
Persiba	34	9	8	17	38	52	35
Persija	34	8	11	15	25	42	35
Persela	34	9	8	17	40	59	35
Barito Putera	34	8	9	17	40	50	33
P'gres Gresik	34	7	8	19	30	63	29
PS TNI	34	7	5	22	37	75	26

CONCACAF

BRITISH VIRGIN ISLANDS

2016-17 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Islanders (C)	14	14	0	0	42	4	42
Sugar Boyz	14	11	0	3	36	12	33
Rebels	14	8	1	5	28	20	25
One Love Utd	14	7	0	7	33	20	21
Wolves	14	6	1	7	30	32	19
Old Madrid	14	5	0	9	19	28	15
Panthers	14	3	1	10	15	34	10
Virgin Gorda	14	0	1	13	6	59	1

HAITI

2016 Cloture (closing) Championship Final
1st leg - Dec 21; 2nd leg - Dec 24
Real Hope v FICA 0-0, 0-2 (agg 0-2)

US VIRGIN ISLANDS

2017 National Championship Final
(the national championship play-offs featured the top 2 sides from the St Croix and St Thomas leagues)
Feb 12: Raymix 1 Helenites 0.

OCEANIA

OFC CHAMPIONS LEAGUE

Qualifying round group
Played in Nuku'alofa, Tonga
Jan 28: Utulei Youth (AmS) 3 Lupe Ole Soaga (Sam) 4; Veitongo (Ton) 0 Puaikura (Coo) 4.
Jan 31: Puaikura 2 Lupe Ole Soaga 1; Veitongo 3 Utulei Youth 1.
Feb 3: Puaikura 3 Utulei Youth 1; Lupe Ole Soaga 1 Veitongo 1.

CHAMPIONS LEAGUE – QUAL RND GP – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Puaikura (Q)	3	3	0	0	9	2	9
Lupe OS (Q)	3	1	1	1	6	6	4
Veitongo	3	1	1	1	4	6	4
Utulei Youth	3	0	0	3	5	10	0

● *Puaikura & Lupe Ole Soaga have qualified for the main group stage*

Main group stage draw
Group A
Central Sport (Tah), Lupe Ole Soaga, Madang[1] (PNG), Magenta (NwC)
[1]Replaced compatriot club Hekari United, who were disqualified because statements/behaviour by staff/players were deemed to have 'damaged the integrity of football'

Group B
Ba (Fij), Hienghene Sport (NwC), Puaikura, Team Wellington (NZ)

Group C
Auckland City (NZ), Lae City Dwellers (PNG), Malampa Revivors (Van), Western United (Sol)

Group D
Erakor Golden Star (Van), Marist (Sol), Rewa (Fij), Tefana (Tah)

Games will be played Feb 25-Mar18

● *The 4 group winners will qualify for the semi-finals*

AFRICA

SEYCHELLES

2016 – FINAL

	P	W	D	L	F	A	Pts
Cote d'Or (C)	21	14	3	4	45	21	45
St Michel Utd	20	12	2	6	38	23	38
La Passe	22	9	8	5	40	23	35
Foresters	21	10	5	6	34	26	35
St Louis Suns	19	10	3	6	31	32	33
Lightstars	21	9	4	8	39	37	31
Anse Reunion	20	7	8	5	24	23	29
Revengers	21	7	7	7	26	26	28
Nthn Dynamo	20	7	7	6	30	36	28
The Lions	19	7	4	8	23	26	25
St John Bosco[1]	22	4	5	13	19	32	17
Plaisance[2] (R)	22	0	0	22	7	51	0

Remaining games of the scheduled 22-round season not played
[1]Stay in top division after winning rel/prom play-off
[2]Excluded after12 rounds having failed to fulfil a fixture on two occasions; remaining games awarded as 2-0 wins to their opponents

KEY TO TABLES
(C) = champions
(R) = relegated
(Q) = qualified for next stage

March 2017 Vol 57 No 7

EDITOR Gavin Hamilton
ASSISTANT EDITOR Nich Hills
DESIGN DIRECTOR Kevin Eason
DESIGN EDITOR Jamie Latchford
DEPUTY DESIGN EDITOR Daniel Franklin
PICTURE EDITOR Duncan Bond
NEWS EDITOR Jamie Rainbow

PICTURES
Pictures copyright: Press Association Images, Getty Images, Action Images and Reuters

Thanks this issue to
Dean Chillmaid, Debbie Millett, Peter Neish

EDITORIAL
Pinehurst 2, Pinehurst Road, Farnborough Business Park, Farnborough, Hants GU14 7BF
Tel: +44 (0) 1252 555255

ADVERTISING AND SPONSORSHIP
Matthew Johnston
Tel: +44 (0) 1252 555367
E-mail: matthew.johnston@timeinc.com

PRODUCTION MANAGER Becky Singleton
MANAGING DIRECTOR Simon Owen
GROUP MANAGING DIRECTOR Oswin Grady

International licensing enquiries
+44 (0) 20 314 85490
E-mail: bianca.hamilton-foster@timeinc.com

Time Inc.

SUBSCRIPTIONS ORDER HOTLINE
+44 (0)333 333 1113
or visit www.magazinesdirect.com

SUBSCRIPTIONS RATES
Annual sub is for 12 months (13 issues, prices include postage) UK: £66.79 Europe/Eire (inc. VAT): 98.85 euros (airmail) USA: $144.48 (airmail) Rest of world: $99.25 (airmail)

Periodicals paid at Rahway, NJ Postmaster: send address changes to *World Soccer*, c/o MAIL America, 365 Blair Road, Avenel NJ 07001, USA. USPS004075

SUBSCRIPTIONS DEPARTMENT
WORLD SOCCER SUBSCRIPTIONS
PO Box 20501
1001 NM Amsterdam
The Netherlands
Tel: +44 (0) 330 333 4333
Email: help@magazinesdirect.com

WorldSoccer is a member of ESM EUROPEAN SPORTS MEDIA

● A Bola (Portugal) ● De Telegraaf (Holland) ● ElfVoetbal (Holland) ● Fanatik (Turkey) ● Frankfurter Allgemeine (Germany) ● Goal News (Greece) ● Kicker (Germany) ● Marca (Spain) ● Nemzeti Sport (Hungary) ● So Foot (France) ● Sport-Express (Russia) ● Sport/Foot (Belgium) ● TIPS Bladet (Denmark) ● World Soccer (UK) ● Titan Sport (China) ● KickOff (S Africa) ● Netease (China) ● SportalKorea (S Korea)

AFRICAN NATIONS CUP 2017

ALGERIA

GOALKEEPERS

16	Malik **ASSELAH**	(20) 08.06.96	JS Kabylie
23	Rais **M'BOLHI**	(30) 25.04.86	Antalyaspor (Tur)
1	Chamseddine **RAHMANI**	(26) 15.09.90	MO Bejaia

DEFENDERS

5	Hicham **BELKAROUI**	(26) 24.08.90	Esperance (Tun)
20	Mokhtar **BELKHITER**	(24) 15.01.92	Club Africain (Tun)
21	Ramy **BENSEBAINI**	(21) 16.04.95	Rennes (Fra)
12	Mohamed **BENYAHIA**	(24) 30.06.92	USM Alger
4	Liassine **CADAMURO**	(28) 05.03.88	Servette (Swi)
3	Faouzi **GHOULAM**	(25) 01.02.91	Napoli (Ita)
2	Aissa **MANDI**	(25) 22.10.91	Real Betis (Spa)
22	Mohamed **MEFTAH**	(31) 05.05.85	USM Alger
6	Djamel **MESBAH**	(32) 09.10.84	Crotone (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

19	Mehdi **ABEID**	(24) 06.08.92	Dijon (Fra)
8	Ismael **BENNACER**	(19) 01.12.97	Arsenal (Eng)
10	Nabil **BENTALEB**	(22) 24.11.94	Schalke (Ger)
11	Yacine **BRAHIMI**	(26) 08.02.90	Porto (Por)
18	Rachid **GHEZZAL**	(24) 09.05.92	Lyon (Fra)
17	Adlene **GUEDIOURA**	(31) 12.11.85	Watford (Eng)
9	Sofiane **HANNI**	(26) 29.12.90	Anderlecht (Blg)

FORWARDS

14	Baghdad **BOUNEDJAH**	(25) 30.11.91	Al Sadd (Qat)
7	Riyad **MAHREZ**	(25) 21.02.91	Leicester C (Eng)
13	Islam **SLIMANI**	(28) 18.06.88	Leicester C (Eng)
15	El Arabi Hillel **SOUDANI**	(29) 25.11.87	Dinamo Zagreb (Cro)

COACH

Georges **LEEKENS** (Blg) (67) 18.05.49

BURKINA FASO

GOALKEEPERS

16	Herve Kouakou **KOFFI**	(20) 16.10.96	ASEC Mimosas (IvC)
23	Germain **SANOU**	(24) 26.05.92	Beauvais (Fra)
1	Aboubacar **SAWADOGO**	(27) 10.08.89	RC Kadiogo

DEFENDERS

20	Yacouba **COULIBALY**	(22) 02.10.94	RC Bobo Dioulasso
14	Issoufou **DAYO**	(25) 06.08.91	RSB Berkane (Mor)
13	Souleymane **KOANDA**	(24) 21.09.92	ASEC Mimosas (IvC)
4	Bakary **KONE**	(28) 27.04.88	Malaga (Spa)
5	Patrick **MALO**	(24) 18.02.92	Smouha (Egy)
3	Issouf **PARO**	(22) 16.10.94	Santos (SAf)
2	Steeve **YAGO**	(24) 16.12.92	Toulouse (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

12	Adama **GUIRA**	(28) 24.04.88	Lens (Fra)
18	Charles **KABORE**	(28) 09.02.88	Krasnodar (Rus)
6	Bakary **SARE**	(26) 05.05.90	Moreirense (Por)
8	Abdou **TRAORE**	(28) 28.12.88	Karabukspor (Tur)
10	Alain **TRAORE**	(29) 01.01.88	Kayserispor (Tur)
19	Bertrand **TRAORE**	(21) 06.09.95	Ajax (Hol)
22	Ibrahim Blati **TOURE**	(22) 04.08.94	Omonia Nicosia (Cyp)

FORWARDS

15	Aristide **BANCE**	(32) 19.09.84	ASEC Mimosas (IvC)
21	Cyrille **BAYALA**	(20) 24.05.96	Sheriff (Mol)
9	Banou **DIAWARA**	(24) 13.02.92	Smouha (Egy)
7	Prejuce **NAKOULMA**	(29) 21.04.87	Kayserispor (Tur)
11	Jonathan **PITROIPA**	(30) 12.04.86	Al Nasr (UAE)
17	Jonathan **ZONGO**	(27) 06.04.89	Almeria (Spa)

COACH

Paulo **DUARTE** (Por) (47) 06.04.69

CAMEROON

GOALKEEPERS

23	Georges **BOKWE**	(27) 14.07.89	Coton Sport
16	Jules **GODA**	(27) 30.05.89	AC Ajaccio (Fra)
1	Fabrice **ONDOA**	(21) 24.12.95	Sevilla (Spa)

DEFENDERS

21	Mohammed **DJETEI**	(22) 18.08.94	Gimnastic (Spa)
19	Collins **FAI**	(24) 13.08.92	Standard Liege (Blg)
2	Ernest **MABOUKA**	(28) 16.06.88	MSK Zilina (Slk)
5	Michael **NGADEU**	(26) 23.11.90	Slavia Prague (CzR)
22	Jonathan **NGWEM**	(25) 20.07.91	Progresso (Ang)
3	Nicolas **N'KOULOU**	(26) 27.03.90	Lyon (Fra)
6	Ambroise **OYONGO**	(25) 22.06.91	Montreal Impact (USA)
4	Adolphe **TEIKEU**	(26) 23.06.90	Sochaux (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

12	Frank **BOYA**	(20) 01.07.96	APEJES Academy
17	Arnaud **DJOUM**	(27) 02.05.89	Hearts (Sco)
14	Georges **MANDJECK**	(28) 09.12.88	Metz (Fra)
15	Sebastien **SIANI**	(30) 21.12.86	Oostende (Blg)
11	Edgar **SALLI**	(24) 17.08.92	Nuremberg (Ger)

FORWARDS

10	Vincent **ABOUBAKAR**	(24) 22.01.92	Besiktas (Tur)
13	Christian **BASSOGOG**	(21) 18.10.95	AaB (Den)
8	Benjamin **MOUKANDJO**	(28) 12.11.88	Lorient (Fra)
18	Robert **NDIP TAMBE**	(22) 22.02.94	Spartak Trnava (Slk)
7	Clinton **N'JIE**	(23) 15.08.93	Marseille (Fra)
20	Karl **TOKO EKAMBI**	(24) 14.09.92	Angers (Fra)
9	Jacques **ZOUA**	(25) 06.09.91	Kaiserslautern (Ger)

COACH

Hugo **BROOS** (Blg) (64) 10.04.52

DR CONGO

GOALKEEPERS

23	Joel **KIASSUMBUA**	(24) 06.04.92	Wohlen (Swi)
16	Mulopo **KUDIMBANA**	(29) 21.01.87	Antwerp (Blg)
1	Ley **MATAMPI**	(27) 18.04.89	TP Mazembe

DEFENDERS

18	Merveille Bope **BOKADI**	(24) 21.05.92	TP Mazembe
4	Jordan **IKOKO**	(22) 03.02.94	Guingamp (Fra)
13	Joyce **LOMALISA**	(23) 18.06.93	Vita Club
22	Chancel **MBEMBA**	(22) 08.08.94	Newcastle United (Eng)
2	Issama **MPEKO**	(30) 03.03.86	TP Mazembe
3	Fabrice **N'SAKALA**	(26) 21.07.90	Alanyaspor (Tur)
5	Marcel **TISSERAND**	(24) 10.01.93	Ingolstadt (Ger)
14	Gabriel **ZAKUANI**	(30) 31.05.86	Northampton Town (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

10	Neeskens **KEBANO**	(24) 10.03.92	Fulham (Eng)
20	Jacques **MAGHOMA**	(29) 23.10.87	Birmingham City (Eng)
8	Paul-Jose **M'POKU**	(24) 19.04.92	Panathinaikos (Gre)
15	Remi **MULUMBA**	(24) 02.11.92	GFC Ajaccio (Fra)
7	Youssouf **MULUMBU**	(29) 25.01.87	Norwich City (Eng)

FORWARDS

17	Cedric **BAKAMBU**	(25) 11.04.91	Villarreal (Spa)
19	Jeremy **BOKILA**	(28) 14.11.88	Al Kharaitiyat (Qat)
12	Jonathan **BOLINGI**	(22) 30.06.94	TP Mazembe
11	Jordan **BOTAKA**	(23) 24.06.93	Charlton Ath (Eng)
6	Junior **KABANANGA**	(27) 04.04.89	Astana (Kaz)
9	Dieumerci **MBOKANI**	(31) 22.11.85	Hull City (Eng)
21	Ndombe **MUBELE**	(24) 17.04.92	Al Ahli (Qat)

COACH

Florent **IBENGE** (55) 04.12.61

EGYPT

GOALKEEPERS

16	Sherif **EKRAMY**	(33) 10.07.83	Al Ahly
1	Essam **EL HADARY**	(43) 15.01.73	Wadi Degla
23	Ahmed **EL SHENAWY**	(25) 14.05.91	Zamalek

DEFENDERS

13	Mohamed **ABDEL-SHAFY**	(31) 01.07.85	Al Ahli (Sau)
12	Ahmed **DOWIDAR**	(29) 29.10.87	Kazma (Kuw)
3	Ahmed **ELMOHAMADY**	(29) 09.09.87	Hull City (Eng)
7	Ahmed **FATHY**	(32) 10.11.84	Al Ahly
4	Omar **GABER**	(24) 30.01.92	Basle (Swi)
2	Ali **GABR**	(30) 10.01.87	Zamalek
15	Karim **HAFEZ**	(20) 12.03.96	Lens (Fra)
6	Ahmed **HEGAZY**	(25) 25.01.91	Al Ahly
20	Saad **SAMIR**	(27) 01.04.89	Al Ahly

MIDFIELDERS

19	Abdallah **EL SAID**	(31) 13 .06.85	Al Ahly
17	Mohamed **ELNENY**	(24) 11.07.92	Arsenal (Eng)
8	Tarek **HAMED**	(28) 24.10.88	Zamalek
21	**KAHRABA**	(22) 13.04.94	Al Ittihad (Sau)
5	Ibrahim **SALAH**	(29) 01.04.87	Zamalek
14	Ramadan **SOBHI**	(19) 27.06.97	Stoke City (Eng)
11	**TREZEGUET**	(22) 01.10.94	Mouscron (Blg)
22	Amr **WARDA**	(23) 17.09.93	Panetolikos (Gre)

FORWARDS

9	**KOKA**	(23) 05.03.93	Braga (Por)
18	Marwan **MOHSEN**	(27) 26.02.89	Al Ahly
10	Mohamed **SALAH**	(24) 15.06.92	Roma (Ita)

COACH

Hector **CUPER** (Arg) (61) 16.11.55

GABON

GOALKEEPERS

23	Yves **BITSEKI MOTO**	(33) 23.04.83	CF Mounana
16	Anthony **MFA MEZUI**	(25) 07.03.91	unattached
1	Didier **OVONO**	(33) 23.01.83	Oostende (Blg)

DEFENDERS

2	Aaron **APPINDANGOYE**	(24) 20.02.92	Laval (Fra)
5	Bruno **ECUELE MANGA**	(28) 16.07.88	Cardiff City (Eng)
3	Franck **OBAMBOU**	(29) 26.06.87	Stade Mandji
6	Johann **OBIANG**	(23) 05.07.93	Troyes (Fra)
8	Lloyd **PALUN**	(28) 28.11.88	Red Star (Fra)
21	Yoann **WACHTER**	(24) 07.04.92	Sedan (Fra)
19	Benjamin **ZE ONDO**	(29) 18.06.87	Mosta (Mlt)

MIDFIELDERS

20	Denis **BOUANGA**	(22) 11.11.94	Tours (Fra)
12	Guelor **KANGA**	(26) 01.09.90	Red Star Belgrade (Ser)
10	Mario **LEMINA**	(23) 01.09.93	Juventus (Ita)
11	Levy **MADINDA**	(24) 11.06.92	Gimnastic (Spa)
13	Samson **MBINGUI**	(24) 09.02.92	Raja Casablanca (Mor)
22	Didier **NDONG**	(22) 17.06.94	Sunderland (Eng)
18	Serge-Junior **NGOUALI**	(24) 23.01.92	Brommapojkarna (Swe)
15	Cedric **ONDO BIYOGHE**	(22) 17.08.94	CF Mounana
17	Andre **BIYOGO POKO**	(23) 07.03.93	Kardemir Karabukspor (Tur)
4	Merlin **TANDJIGORA**	(26) 06.04.90	Meizhou Hakka (Chn)

FORWARDS

14	Serge **ANGOUE**	(22) 03.08.94	Uniao de Leiria (Por)
9	Pierre-Emerick **AUBAMEYANG**	(27) 18.06.89	B'Dortmund (Ger)
7	Malick **EVOUNA**	(24) 28.11.92	Tianjin Teda (Chn)

COACH

Jose Antonio **CAMACHO** (Spa) (61) 08.06.55

GHANA

GOALKEEPERS

16	Fatau **DAUDA**	(31) 06.04.85	Enyimba (Nga)
12	Richard **OFORI**	(23) 01.11.93	Wa All Stars
1	**BRIMAH** Razak	(29) 22.06.87	Cordoba (Spa)

DEFENDERS

22	Frank **ACHEAMPONG**	(23) 16.10.93	Anderlecht (Blg)
23	Harrison **AFFUL**	(30) 24.07.86	Columbus Crew (USA)
21	John **BOYE**	(29) 23.04.87	Sivasspor (Tur)
19	Edwin **GYIMAH**	(25) 09.03.91	Orlando Pirates (SAf)
4	Jonathan **MENSAH**	(26) 13.07.90	Columbus Crew (USA)
17	Baba **RAHMAN**	(22) 02.07.94	Schalke (Ger)
2	Andy **YIADOM**	(25) 02.12.91	Barnsley (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

6	Afriyie **ACQUAH**	(25) 05.01.92	Torino (Ita)
8	Emmanuel **AGYEMANG-BADU**	(26) 02.12.90	Udinese (Ita)
18	Daniel **AMARTEY**	(22) 21.12.94	Leicester City (Eng)
7	Christian **ATSU**	(24) 10.06.92	Newcastle Utd (Eng)
10	Andre **AYEW**	(27) 17.12.89	West Ham United (Eng)
15	Ebenezer **OFORI**	(21) 01.07.95	AIK (Swe)
5	Thomas **PARTEY**	(23) 13.06.93	Atletico Madrid (Spa)
14	Bernard **TEKPETEY**	(19) 03.09.97	Schalke (Ger)
11	Mubarak **WAKASO**	(26) 25.07.90	Panathinaikos (Gre)

FORWARDS

13	Ebenezer **ASSIFUAH**	(23) 03.07.93	Sion (Swi)
9	Jordan **AYEW**	(25) 11.09.91	Aston Villa (Eng)
3	Asamoah **GYAN**	(31) 22.11.85	Al Ahli (UAE)
20	Samuel **TETTEH**	(20) 28.07.96	Liefering (Aut)

COACH

Avram **GRANT** (Isr) (61) 06.02.55

GUINEA-BISSAU

GOALKEEPERS

23	Rui **DABO**	(22) 05.10.94	Cova da Piedade (Por)
1	**JONAS** Mendes	(27) 20.11.89	Salgueiros (Por)
12	Papa **MBAYE**	(31) 11.12.85	Orellana (Spa)

DEFENDERS

4	Tomas **DABO**	(23) 20.10.93	Braga (Por)
6	**ERIDSON**	(26) 25.06.90	Freamunde (Por)
14	**JUARY**	(24) 20.02.92	Mafra (Por)
22	**MAMADU** Cande	(26) 29.08.90	Tondela (Por)
2	Emmanuel **MENDY**	(26) 30.03.90	Pulpileno (Spa)
5	**RUDINILSON** Silva	(22) 20.08.94	unattached
16	Agostinho **SOARES**	(26) 27.01.90	Sporting da Covilha (Por)

MIDFIELDERS

10	Bocundji **CA**	(30) 28.12.86	unattached
20	Idrissa **CAMARA**	(24) 30.10.92	Avellino (Ita)
8	**FRANCISCO JUNIOR**	(24) 18.01.92	Stromsgodset (Nor)
11	**NANI** Soares	(25) 17.09.91	Felgueiras (Por)
18	**PIQUETI**	(23) 12.02.93	Braga (Por)
3	**SANA**	(25) 29.12.91	Academico de Viseu (Por)
15	**TONI SILVA**	(23) 15.09.93	Levadiakos (Gre)
7	**ZEZINHO**	(24) 23.09.92	Levadiakos (Gre)

FORWARDS

21	**ALDAIR**	(24) 31.01.92	Olhanense (Por)
9	Abel **CAMARA**	(27) 06.01.90	Belenenses (Por)
19	**JOAO MARIO**	(23) 11.10.93	Chaves (Por)
13	Frederic **MENDY**	(28) 18.11.88	Jeju United (SKo)
17	Leocisio **SAMI**	(28) 18.12.88	Akhisar Belediyespor (Tur)

COACH

Baciro **CANDE** (68) 18.03.48

(ages as of 14.01.17)

IVORY COAST

GOALKEEPERS

16 Sylvain **GBOHOUO** (28) 29.10.88 TP Mazembe (DRC)
1 Sayouba **MANDE** (23) 15.06.93 Stabaek (Nor)
23 Badra **SANGARE** (30) 30.05.86 AS Tanda

DEFENDERS

17 Serge **AURIER** (24) 24.12.92 Paris Saint-Germain (Fra)
22 Mamadou **BAGAYOKO** (27) 31.12.89 Sint-Truiden (Blg)
21 Eric **BAILLY** (22) 12.04.94 Manchester United (Eng)
19 Simon **DELI** (25) 27.10.91 Slavia Prague (CzR)
5 Wilfried **KANON** (23) 06.07.93 Den Haag (Hol)
4 Lamine **KONE** (27) 01.02.89 Sunderland (Eng)
18 Adama **TRAORE** (26) 03.02.90 Basle (Swi)

MIDFIELDERS

7 Victorien **ANGBAN** (20) 29.09.96 Granada (Spa)
20 Serey **DIE** (32) 07.11.84 Basle (Swi)
10 Cheick **DOUKOURE** (24) 11.09.92 Metz (Fra)
15 Max **GRADEL** (29) 30.11.87 Bournemouth (Eng)
11 Franck **KESSIE** (20) 19.12.96 Atalanta (Ita)
3 Serge **N'GUESSAN** (22) 31.07.94 Nancy (Fra)
6 Jean **SERI** (25) 19.07.91 Nice (Fra)

FORWARDS

12 Wilfried **BONY** (28) 10.12.88 Stoke City (Eng)
8 Salomon **KALOU** (31) 05.08.85 Hertha Berlin (Ger)
14 Jonathan **KODJIA** (27) 22.10.89 Aston Villa (Eng)
2 Nicolas **PEPE** (21) 29.05.95 Angers (Fra)
13 Giovanni **SIO** (27) 31.03.89 Rennes (Fra)
9 Wilfried **ZAHA** (24) 10.11.92 Crystal Palace (Eng)

COACH

Michel **DUSSUYER** (Fra) (57) 28.05.59

MALI

GOALKEEPERS

16 Soumbeila **DIAKITE** (32) 25.08.84 Stade Malien
22 Djigui **DIARRA** (21) 27.02.95 Stade Malien
1 Oumar **SISSOKO** (29) 13.09.87 Orleans (Fra)

DEFENDERS

4 Salif **COULIBALY** (28) 13.05.88 TP Mazembe (DRC)
23 Ousmane **COULIBALY** (27) 09.07.89 Panathinaikos (Gre)
15 Mohamed **KONATE** (24) 20.10.92 Nahdat Berkane (Mor)
3 Youssouf **KONE** (21) 05.07.95 Lille (Fra)
21 Mahamadou **N'DIAYE** (26) 21.06.90 Troyes (Fra)
5 Charles **TRAORE** (25) 01.01.92 Troyes (Fra)
2 Hamary **TRAORE** (24) 27.01.92 Reims (Fra)
13 Molla **WAGUE** (25) 21.02.91 Udinese (Ita)

MIDFIELDERS

20 Yves **BISSOUMA** (20) 30.08.96 Lille (Fra)
6 Lassana **COULIBALY** (20) 10.04.96 SC Bastia (Fra)
12 Moussa **DOUMBIA** (22) 15.08.94 Rostov (Rus)
17 Mamoutou **N'DIAYE** (26) 15.03.90 Antwerp (Blg)
11 Bakary **SAKO** (28) 26.04.88 Crystal Palace (Eng)
18 Samba **SOW** (27) 29.04.89 Kayserispor (Tur)
8 Yacouba **SYLLA** (26) 29.11.90 Montpellier (Fra)
19 Adama **TRAORE** (21) 28.06.95 Monaco (Fra)
14 Sambou **YATABARE** (27) 02.03.89 Werder Bremen (Ger)

FORWARDS

10 Kalifa **COULIBALY** (25) 21.08.91 Gent (Blg)
9 Moussa **MAREGA** (25) 14.04.91 Vitoria Guimaraes (Por)
7 Mustapha **YATABARE** (30) 26.01.86 Kardemir Karabukspor (Tur)

COACH

Alain **GIRESSE** (Fra) (64) 02.08.52

MOROCCO

GOALKEEPERS

1 Yassine **BOUNOU** (25) 05.04.91 Girona (Spa)
22 Yassine **EL KHARROUBI** (26) 29.03.90 Lokomotiv Plovdiv (Blg)
12 Munir **EL KAJOUI** (27) 10.05.89 Numancia (Spa)

DEFENDERS

18 Amine **ATOUCHI** (24) 01.07.92 Wydad Casablanca
5 Medhi **BENATIA** (29) 17.04.87 Juventus (Ita)
3 Fouad **CHAFIK** (30) 16.10.86 Dijon (Fra)
4 Manuel **DA COSTA** (30) 06.05.86 Olympiakos (Gre)
2 Hamza **MENDYL** (19) 21.10.97 Lille (Fra)
10 Faycal **RHERRAS** (23) 07.04.93 Hearts (Sco)
6 Romain **SAISS** (26) 26.03.90 Wolverhampton W (Eng)

MIDFIELDERS

15 Youssef **AIT BENNASSER** (20) 07.07.96 Nancy (Fra)
14 Mbark **BOUSSOUFA** (32) 15.08.84 Al Jazira (UAE)
21 Mehdi **CARCELA** (27) 01.07.89 Granada (Spa)
8 Karim **EL AHMADI** (31) 27.01.85 Feyenoord (Hol)
16 Omar **EL KADDOURI** (26) 21.08.90 Napoli (Ita)
17 Nabil **DIRAR** (30) 25.02.86 Monaco (Fra)
11 Faycal **FAJR** (28) 01.08.88 Dep La Coruna (Spa)
19 Mounir **OBBADI** (33) 04.04.83 Lille (Fra)

FORWARDS

23 Rachid **ALIOUI** (24) 18.06.92 Nimes (Fra)
20 Aziz **BOUHADDOUZ** (29) 30.03.87 St Pauli (Ger)
13 Khalid **BOUTAIB** (29) 24.04.87 Strasbourg (Fra)
9 Youssef **EL ARABI** (29) 03.02.87 Lekhwiya (Qat)
7 Youssef **EN-NESYRI** (19) 01.06.97 Malaga (Spain)

COACH

Herve **RENARD** (Fra) (48) 30.09.68

SENEGAL

GOALKEEPERS

1 Abdoulaye **DIALLO** (24) 30.03.92 Caykur Rizespor (Tur)
16 Khadim **N'DIAYE** (32) 30.11.84 Horoya (Gui)
23 Pape Seydou **N'DIAYE** (23) 11.02.93 Niarry Tally

DEFENDERS

19 Saliou **CISS** (27) 15.09.89 Valenciennes (Fra)
21 Lamine **GASSAMA** (27) 20.10.89 Alanyaspor (Tur)
3 Kalidou **KOULIBALY** (25) 20.06.91 Napoli (Ita)
8 Cheikhou **KOUYATE** (27) 21.12.89 West Ham United (Eng)
4 Cheikh **M'BENGUE** (28) 23.07.88 Saint-Etienne (Fra)
2 Kara **MBODJ** (27) 11.11.89 Anderlecht (Blg)
14 Zargo **TOURE** (27) 11.11.89 Lorient (Fra)

MIDFIELDERS

12 Mohamed **DIAME** (29) 14.06.87 Newcastle Utd (Eng)
15 Papakouli **DIOP** (30) 19.03.86 Espanyol (Spa)
5 Idrissa **GUEYE** (27) 26.09.89 Everton (Eng)
20 **KEITA** Balde (21) 08.03.95 Lazio (Ita)
17 Papa Alioune **NDIAYE** (26) 27.10.90 Osmanlispor (Tur)
11 Cheikh **N'DOYE** (30) 29.03.86 Angers (Fra)
22 Henri **SAIVET** (26) 26.10.90 Saint-Etienne (Fra)
18 Ismaila **SARR** (18) 25.02.98 Metz (Fra)

FORWARDS

6 Famara **DIEDHIOU** (24) 15.12.92 Angers (Fra)
9 Mame Biram **DIOUF** (29) 16.12.87 Stoke City (Eng)
13 Moussa **KONATE** (23) 03.04.93 Sion (Swi)
10 Sadio **MANE** (24) 10.04.92 Liverpool (Fra)
7 Moussa **SOW** (30) 19.01.86 Fenerbahce (Tur)

COACH

Aliou **CISSE** (40) 24.03.76

TOGO

GOALKEEPERS

16 Kossi **AGASSA** (38) 02.07.78 unattached
1 Cedric **MENSAH** (27) 06.03.89 Le Mans (Fra)
23 Baba **TCHAGOUNI** (26) 31.12.90 Marmande (Fra)

DEFENDERS

5 Serge **AKAKPO** (29) 15.10.87 Trabzonspor (Tur)
9 Vincent **BOSSOU** (30) 07.02.86 Young Africans (Tan)
21 **DJENE** (25) 31.12.91 Sint-Truiden (Blg)
11 Maklibe **KOULOUM** (29) 05.10.87 Dynamic Togolais
6 Abdoul-Gafar **MAMAH** (31) 24.08.85 Dacia Chisinau (Mol)
13 Sadat **OURO-AKORIKO** (28) 01.02.88 Al Khaleej (Sau)
3 Hakim **OURO-SAMA** (19) 28.12.97 Togo-Port

MIDFIELDERS

18 Lalawele **ATAKORA** (26) 09.11.90 Helsingborg (Swe)
2 Franco **ATCHOU** (21) 03.12.95 Dynamic Togolais
10 Floyd **AYITE** (28) 15.12.88 Fulham (Eng)
22 Ihlas **BEBOU** (22) 23.04.94 F Dusseldorf (Ger)
12 Razak **BOUKARI** (29) 25.04.87 Chateauroux (Fra)
7 Mathieu **DOSSEVI** (28) 12.02.88 Standard Liege (Blg)
20 Henri **ENINFUL** (24) 21.07.92 Doxa Katokopias (Cyp)
17 Serge **GAKPE** (29) 07.05.87 Genoa (Ita)
15 Alaixys **ROMAO** (32) 18.01.84 Olympiakos (Gre)
14 Prince **SEGBEFIA** (25) 11.03.91 Goztepe Izmir (Tur)

FORWARDS

4 Emmanuel **ADEBAYOR** (32) 26.02.84 unattached
8 Komlan **AGBEGNIADAN** (25) 26.03.91 West African FA (Gha)
19 Kodjo Fo-Doh **LABA** (24) 27.01.92 Nahdat Berkane (Mor)

COACH

Claude **LE ROY** (Fra) (68) 06.02.48

TUNISIA

GOALKEEPERS

22 Moez **BEN CHERIFIA** (25) 24.06.91 Esperance
1 Rami **JRIDI** (31) 25.04.85 CS Sfaxien
16 Aymen **MATHLOUTHI** (32) 14.09.84 Etoile du Sahel

DEFENDERS

3 Aymen **ABDENNOUR** (27) 06.08.89 Valencia (Spa)
2 Syam **BEN YOUSSEF** (27) 21.03.89 Caen (Fra)
4 Zied **BOUGHATTAS** (26) 25.12.90 Etoile du Sahel
6 Chamseddine **DHAOUADI** (29) 16.01.87 Esperance
5 Sliman **KCHOUK** (22) 07.05.94 CA Bizertin
12 Ali **MAALOUL** (27) 01.01.90 Al Ahly (Egy)
17 Hamza **MATHLOUTHI** (24) 25.07.92 CS Sfaxien
21 Hamdi **NAGGUEZ** (24) 28.10.92 Etoile du Sahel
20 Mohamed Ali **YACOUBI** (26) 05.10.90 Caykur Rizespor (Tur)

MIDFIELDERS

15 Larry **AZOUNI** (22) 23.03.94 Nimes (Fra)
14 Mohamed Amine **BEN AMOR** (24) 03.05.92 Etoile du Sahel
18 Ahmed **KHALIL** (22) 21.12.94 Club Africain
10 Wahbi **KHAZRI** (25) 08.02.91 Sunderland (Eng)
8 Hamza **LAHMAR** (26) 28.05.90 Etoile du Sahel
7 Youssef **MSAKNI** (26) 28.10.90 Lekhwiya (Qat)
13 Ferjani **SASSI** (24) 18.03.92 Esperance
23 Naim **SLITI** (24) 27.07.92 Lille (Fra)

FORWARDS

9 Ahmed **AKAICHI** (27) 23.02.89 Al Ittihad (Sau)
19 Saber **KHALIFA** (30) 14.10.86 Club Africain
11 Taha Yassine **KHENISSI** (25) 06.01.92 Esperance

COACH

Henryk **KASPERCZAK** (Pol) (70) 10.07.46

UGANDA

GOALKEEPERS

1 Robert **ODONGKARA** (27) 02.09.89 Saint George (Eth)
18 Denis **ONYANGO** (29) 15.05.87 Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf)
19 Jamal **SALIM** (21) 27.05.95 Al Merrikh (Sud)

DEFENDERS

20 Timothy **AWANY** (20) 06.08.96 Kampala CCA
12 Denis **IGUMA** (22) 10.02.94 Al Ahed (Leb)
5 Isaac **ISINDE** (25) 16.04.91 Saint George (Eth)
4 Murushid **JUUKO** (22) 14.04.94 Simba (Tan)
2 Joseph **OCHAYA** (23) 14.12.93 Kampala CCA
14 Nicholas **WADADA** (22) 27.07.94 Vipers SC
15 Godfrey **WALUSIMBI** (27) 03.07.89 Gor Mahia (Ken)

MIDFIELDERS

8 Khalid **AUCHO** (23) 08.08.93 Baroka (SAf)
23 Micheal **AZIRA** (29) 22.08.87 Colorado Rapids (USA)
22 Shafik **BATAMBUZE** (22) 14.06.94 Tusker (Ken)
3 Geoffrey **KIZITO** (23) 02.02.93 Than Quang Ninh (Vie)
10 **LUWAGGA** Kizito (23) 20.12.93 Rio Ave (Por)
6 Tony **MAWEJJE** (29) 15.12.87 Throttur (Ice)
17 Farouk **MIYA** (21) 26.11.95 Standard Liege (Blg)
13 Moses **OLOYA** (24) 22.10.92 Hanoi (Vie)
16 Hassan **WASSWA** (28) 14.02.88 Al Shorta (Irq)

FORWARDS

11 Geofrey **MASSA** (30) 19.02.86 Baroka (SAf)
7 Yunus **SENTAMU** (22) 13.08.94 Ilves (Ice)
21 Muhammad **SHABAN** (19) 11.01.98 Onduparaka
9 Geoffrey **SSERUNKUMA** (33) 07.06.83 Lweza

COACH

Milutin **SREDOJEVIC** (Ser) (47) 01.09.69

ZIMBABWE

GOALKEEPERS

1 Bernard **DONOVAN** (21) 12.07.95 How Mine
23 Takabva **MAWAYA** (23) 02.03.93 Hwange
16 Tatenda **MKURUVA** (21) 04.01.96 Dynamos

DEFENDERS

6 Onismor **BHASERA** (31) 07.01.86 SuperSport United (SAf)
15 Teenage **HADEBE** (21) 17.09.95 Chicken Inn
12 Bruce **KANGWA** (28) 24.07.88 Azam (Tan)
22 Oscar **MACHAPA** (29) 01.06.87 Vita Club (DRC)
19 Lawrence **MHLANGA** (23) 20.12.93 Chicken Inn
5 Elisha **MUROIWA** (27) 28.01.89 Dynamos
2 Costa **NHAMOINESU** (31) 06.01.86 Sparta Prague (CzR)
4 Hardlife **ZVIREKWI** (29) 05.05.87 CAPS United

MIDFIELDERS

20 Khama **BILLIAT** (26) 19.08.90 Mamelodi Sundowns (SAf)
14 Willard **KATSANDE** (30) 15.01.86 Kaizer Chiefs (SAf)
10 Kudakwashe **MAHACHI** (23) 29.09.93 Golden Arrows (SAf)
18 Marvelous **NAKAMBA** (22) 19.01.94 Vitesse (Hol)
3 Danny **PHIRI** (27) 25.07.89 Golden Arrows (SAf)

FORWARDS

21 Tino **KADEWERE** (21) 05.01.96 Djurgarden (Swe)
13 Cuthbert **MALAJILA** (31) 03.10.85 Bidvest Wits (SAf)
9 Nyasha **MUSHEKWI** (29) 21.08.87 Dalian Yifang (Chn)
17 Knowledge **MUSONA** (26) 21.06.90 Oostende (Blg)
11 Tendai **NDORO** (31) 15.05.85 Orlando Pirates (SAf)
8 Evans **RUSIKE** (26) 13.06.90 Maritzburg United (SAf)
7 Matthew **RUSIKE** (26) 28.06.90 Helsingborg (Swe)

COACH

Callisto **PASUWA** (46) 20.06.70

World Soccer's GREAT MATCHES

MAY 25, 1967, PORTUGAL: EUROPEAN CUP FINAL

Celtic 2 Internazionale 1

'Lisbon Lions' overcome obdurate Italian defence to claim European club football's biggest prize

Solid...no way through Inter's defence for Celtic

While this may not have been an end-to-end thriller, it was a fine example of a dazzling attacking force taking on a superbly drilled defence.

As Roger MacDonald explained in our July 1967 edition: "Inter, deprived of their master tactician, Luis Suarez, pinned everything on the strength of their defence." But he also pointed out: "Just as a wall defying the pressures of the sea needs constant repair if it is not to leak and decay, so Inter's strength ebbed to nothing, until the erosion engendered by Celtic's skill brought their stagnant obstacle to ruin."

In goalscorer Joe McBride, Celtic were also missing a key player at Lisbon's Estadio Nacional, but they more than made up for his absence with superb teamwork and superior stamina.

MacDonald wrote: "Some of Europe's finest attacking teams have fallen to the champions of *catenaccio*. If the Scots did not quite discover the master key that could undo every infamous Italian padlock, they tugged away at its chain, testing every link. Jimmy Johnstone, attached to Tarcisio Burgnich by invisible handcuffs, slipped his jailer like a second Houdini."

But as much as Celtic dominated, so Inter resisted. The Italians withstood attack after attack and held the lead until just after the hour mark.

Skipper...Billy McNeill

The report continued: "Celtic flagged just a little, aware that some incisive force was needed if all their delicate approach work was to bear fruition. Gemmell provided it.

"His shot from the edge of the penalty area cut through the waves of Italians like a deadly torpedo."

And when Bobby Murdoch's shot was then deflected by Stevie Chalmers, Jock Stein's team of home-grown Glaswegians became the first side from the British Isles to lift the European Cup. WS

Referee: Tschenscher (WG)

KEY MOMENTS

Penalty...Sandro Mazzola (number eight)

3min Renato Cappellini's cross is met by the head of Sandro Mazzola for Inter but the ball ricochets off keeper Ronnie Simpson to safety.

5min A looping header from Jimmy Johnstone is tipped over the bar by Inter goalkeeper Giuliano Sarti.

7min Cappellini is fouled in the penalty area by Jim Craig. Mazzola despatches the spot-kick. **0-1**

11min Bertie Auld breaks through the Inter defence but his shot comes back off the crossbar.

34min A right-foot volley from Tommy Gemmell just inside the penalty area is palmed away by Sarti.

47min Inter scramble the ball away from an indirect free-kick inside the penalty area, but a shot by Gemmell is saved on the line by Sarti.

63min From a pass by Craig on the edge of the penalty area, Gemmell lashes in a 25-yard shot. **1-1**

66min A left-foot shot by Bobby Murdoch is bound for the top corner but Sarti produces another fine save.

84min Murdoch's shot is diverted into the net, from the edge of the six-yard area, by Stevie Chalmers. **2-1**

Decisive...Stevie Chalmers (number nine)

NEXT MONTH APRIL ISSUE ON SALE MARCH 24

wyscout

Soccer Analytics Course

DREAMING of a CAREER in SOCCER?

Tommy Smyth
ESPN Soccer Analyst

Matt Martin
MLS Timbers
Scouting Director

Lee Fraser
Newcastle United
Technical Scout

John Print
FIFA Agent

Sky Andrews
FIFA Agent

Lynn Lashbrook
SMWW President

SPORTS MANAGEMENT WORLDWIDE

JOIN US
London Football
Career Conference
September 2017

Start or Advance Your Career in:

- Scouting
- Sports Agent
- Broadcasting
- Game Operations
- Head Coach
- Soccer Analytics
- Player Personnel
- Marketing & PR
- Management
- Front Office

Eight-week online interactive training courses led by experts in the English Premier League, Football League and MLS includes:

- **Tommy Smyth** – ESPN Soccer Analyst
- **Matt Martin** – MLS Portland Timbers Scouting Director
- **Lee Fraser** – Newcastle United FC Technical Scout
- **John Print** – FIFA Agent
- **Sky Andrews** – FIFA Agent
- **Dr. Lynn Lashbrook** – SMWW President

Learn the skills, strategies and techniques to advance to the front of the hiring line in soccer scouting, talent ID, soccer agency, sports marketing and pro soccer leagues including: **EPL, La Liga, Serie A, Ligue 1, Bundesliga, A-League and MLS.**

SMWW.com
USA: +1 503 445 7105
UK: +44 (0)20 8767 0067

SW_2_17

PRO:DIRECT
SOCCER

EXCLUSIVE

A REAL BOOT FOR REAL PLAYERS

ADIDAS COPA GLORO 17 FG

QR: 144718 - £80

COPA GLORO - HOW DO YOU WEAR YOURS?

Dan Leydon - @danleydon

'The Becks'
Tongue pulled right down, elastic between studs, goals from the half-way line.

'The Purist'
Thinks a stray tongue might affect his passing stats, so makes sure it's neatly tucked in.

'The Ripper'
Tears off the tongue with his bare hands. May need some calming down before kick-off.

'The Oddball'
This is serious misuse of football boots and should be a yellow card. If you do this, don't.